

## **Reflection for Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

### **There is always Hope!**

Did you know that Tearfund released research a couple of weeks ago that they have conducted since the beginning of lockdown in the UK and found that 1 in 4 people are engaging with worship online during this time?! That means if you have 2 neighbours living either side of you 1 of them are exploring faith and joining in worship online in some capacity! That is incredible! What is more, a third of these people are within the age bracket that are 'missing' from our church communities, those this Diocese has invested in engaging with: 20's-40's. This gives me hope.

I know some of you are unsure about going back to church at the moment, for fear of health (as someone in the vulnerable category I am the same). While others of you are looking forward to sitting on your favourite hard pew and staring at the face of your vicar, some of you might have even forgotten what we look like. Wherever you are on this scale, can I assure you the church is far from dead during this period. In fact, it is the opposite, it is growing! This should give us hope for moving forward.

A friend of mine, who is a rural vicar in this Diocese, told me that since lockdown began he has an attendance on his online Zoom service, that is also live streamed on Facebook (yes I know to some of you I am now speaking in tongues...), of 300 people. There is hope for the Rural Church.

Today I attended a virtual conference, it was the best conference I have ever attended because I got to sunbath at the same time and top up my coffee whenever I wanted to without disturbing anyone. At the conference, Bishop Jill who was with us on Mission the weekend before we went into lockdown, spoke about how we need to think about the language and form of church that engages with those we want to reach. We need to think of the 'who' and then address the 'how'.

At present the 'how' might not be our preference, but it is using a language (all be it a foreign language to some of us), or a style, that engages with the 'who' we have been missing. So I wonder, as we ponder and carefully consider reopening our buildings, what this might mean for us moving forward? What is it we are hoping for? Who is it we want to continue to engage with? What do we want church to look like? What do we want to take with us out of lockdown and into the future and what do we want, or are willing, to leave behind for something different, for something that allows for others to be part of our church community?

As you ponder these questions and consider how life might be going forward, look to our God of Hope and He will share with you His Hope for your life, your community and your church.