

Reflection for Friday 17th July by Revd Catherine Toase.

Having just finished reading Christopher Ash book "Remaking a Broken World" it started me thinking of how the world would be, when we have come through all the separation due to the virus.

Our world has always had periods where people become separated from one another due to disharmony and misfortune, and it is still happens at every level today, this was highlighted recently by the 40% rise in people requesting advice about divorce due to the lock down. From the young, families to international levels, it's hard to make and maintain harmony sometimes.

The news and media constantly report on the broken relationships, strife-ridden communities and warring nations.

So how as a church can we try and build harmony with such a scattered fragmented world, especially now?

The isolation of the lock down has indeed helped us as a church rethink how we do church - Zoom, face book even drive-in church, which is reaching far more people than would normally attend the church service - but they are still scattered and not gathered for worshipping God together.

Jesus indeed told the disciples to go out into the world and preach the word of God. (Matthew 28:16-20) But by doing this the early Christians felt a need to create church. They gathered together, because the local church was a central point to gather together, praise God, deepen their faith and support one another after being scattered around the towns.

I reflected on how I would be able to meet up with those unknown people logging into the services to support, share and help them deepen their faith.

Would those people want to gather in a local church?

Or was being anonymous the appeal?

Christopher Ash in this book goes through the Bible and looks at all the times the children of God became scattered, starting right back from the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve chose to leave, to become more independent of God.

Yet it seems that after every period of the Israelites being scattered, God never left them, but guided them back to be united under God again. When they came back to seeing God as their Lord, they gathered together stronger than they were the last time, stronger in faith, stronger in fellowship and number of believers.

So with this in mind when life begins to get back to normal, how can I/we as local churches reach out further into the scattered world created by the on line services, and gather those individuals who attend the on-line services into our fellowship of gathered congregations, locally or nationally?

There is no easy answer, but as God guided the Israelites throughout the Old Testament when His People were scattered, so I am convinced He will give us the wisdom to know how to gather those who have joined us on the on-line services. The community of the local church is not only a gathering of worshippers, it is a social gathering offering hospitality, where people care about one another and are willing to help. This can't

happen when we are scattered, not when people choose to only watch the services on-line or can only watch on-line due to circumstances.

As we start to gather again this hymn by John Sammis, "when I walk with the Lord" with the chorus of "trust and obey, for there is no other way" comes to mind as a starting point.