

The Bigger Picture

Doing Church Differently

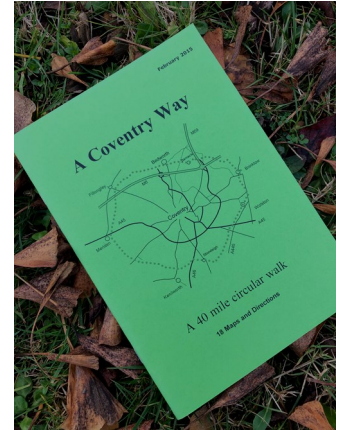
Week 33

29th November 2020

Word for the week

Words of wisdom from our Pastor, Mike....

When I arrived in Coventry 6 years ago, people soon found out I love walking and more than one person gave me a booklet with all the maps and directions for 'A Coventry Way'. This is a 40 mile footpath that goes around the extreme outer edge of our city. I've looked at the booklet a few times. I've walked bits of it. Now, at last, during the 2nd national lockdown, I'm well on my way to doing all of it and the experience has been a lot more fun than I had previously imagined!



It reminds me a little bit about the Bible. We may own more than one copy. We may look at it sometimes. But, ultimately, the Bible is worthless unless it leads us into the experience of walking with Jesus Christ and that might be more fun than we imagine.

At the time of writing, I've walked more than 30 miles of 'A Coventry Way' (60 miles there and back!) There are lots of pretty bits, lots of predictable bits and even one or two precarious bits. Doesn't that sum up our experience of life? Isn't it a lot safer, a lot more sensible and a lot more satisfying to look to God to guide us every step of the way?

So, what is my favourite part of 'A Coventry Way'? I've yet to find anywhere more pleasant than Meriden which is the official starting point. What's the best part of the Christian life? There is nothing more exciting than our first experience of God and our first love for him or maybe you disagree. Let me know!

Feeling Low? Look up!

Mike looks at what you can do when you lack self-esteem (part 3)

Pray about a specific goal in your life

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this.

Psalm 37: 3-5

Confide in others who are spiritually mature and trustworthy

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard

him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. Acts 18: 24-26

Thank God that he has a holistic interest in the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical aspects of your life

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10: 9-10

Cry out for God's comfort and ask God for opportunities to comfort, encourage and affirm others

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4

What should we pray?

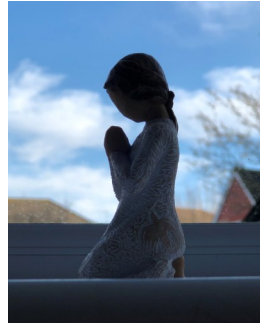
Mike brings us 4 focuses for praying about the impact of Covid-19

1. For the most vulnerable including those living in poverty

Father God, protect those in our world who are most vulnerable to COVID-19. We lift up the elderly, those with pre-existing health conditions and those without access to good medical care. We pray they would know your peace, comfort and protection. In Jesus name. Amen.

2. The church

Father God we pray for churches to be a light and support to their communities during this time. We pray people know they can look to their local church



for help. Loving God, help us, as the church, to love our neighbour. Help us to point others towards your love with our practical acts of love and compassion. Amen.

3. Governments and policy makers

Father God, we pray for great wisdom for our government and health advisers. Lord, please guide their decisions and help them to communicate plans clearly. We pray the vaccines are safe and effective in stopping the spread of the Coronavirus. Amen.

4. Those who are lonely and fearful

God, we thank you that your perfect love casts out all fear. We lift up all who are feeling gripped by fear during these times. We pray where there is fear, your peace would reign. Amen.

SHARON'S SNIPPETS

Advent

It's the first Sunday in Advent. Advent is a time of waiting, a time of preparation.

Most of 2020 has felt like a time of waiting, waiting to get back to normal. When we realised it wasn't going away quickly, there was lots of talk of a new normal, and a sense that people were finding a way of living with masks and social distancing.

Now a vaccine is in sight we have hope of a return to normal. The experts suggest it will take about 6 months to get the country vaccinated so we have more 'waiting' ahead of us.

During this time don't resort to putting things on hold and waiting for the old normal to return, particularly in your faith.

Find new ways to worship God, to serve God, to work out your ministry. Ways that stay within the restrictions and keep everyone safe.

Keep Going

I was recently driving on the A14 in a heavy rain storm. With window wipers on full speed, the window wasn't being cleared, made worse by the spray from the truck I was overtaking. Unable to see the road in front of me, I slowed down.



The run up to Christmas is a great time to get the Good News out there. And advent is a time to prepare your heart to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

So don't spend the time just waiting to get back to normal, make it active waiting. Find a new way to worship and a new way to witness.

Lighting the Advent Candles

Week 1 - HOPE

We light the first advent candle to remind us that all our hope is based on the good news that Jesus proclaimed.

This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began² just as the prophet Isaiah had written:

"Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way.³ He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!"

(Mark 1: 1-3)

However, I realised if I stayed in place things weren't going to change. So I took a deep breath and pressed on, trusting the road ahead was clear.

Through the worst of it, I could see a break in the clouds ahead of me. I felt hope and the sense that there was a message for someone in this. If you can't see the way ahead I encourage you to keep going. Trust God to steer you through and look after you until you see the break in the clouds.