

Read (again) John 21 verses 1-3 *"We will go with you"* (Verse 3 NRSV)

Dear Friends

For our final reflection on the disciples who are "Waiting in Jerusalem" we return to the short passage above. However on this occasion, we are not thinking about Simon-Peter, but rather some of the other disciples. In the midst of Peter's impatience, Thomas' doubting and the arguments of James and John, how might the others have felt? Perhaps the verses above give us some kind of indication.

When Peter declares that he is going fishing, the others decide to go with him. Why? Because for many of them it is what they are used to doing. To use a current phrase, they are following their instincts – returning to what is familiar to them and doing something they are comfortable doing. Now as they wait, perhaps there is a longing to get back to those familiar things. Once this "Comforter" arrives, perhaps things can get back to normal.

In today's world, where we continue to travel through a gradually loosening lockdown, many Christians are wondering when we will be able to return to our churches and get things back to how they used to be before the Coronavirus pandemic hit our shores. No one can give a definitive answer as of yet. It may be July, August, September or even beyond that when we get the green light to open our church door again, but one thing we have to do is **lose the term "Back to normal"** because we won't be.

Our friends in the United Reformed Church have produced an excellent booklet, called the "New Normal" which maps a way in which churches can emerge from our current lockdown. (The Methodist Church will either adopt said booklet as it stands or produce a Methodist version of same). The booklet in question tells in so many ways how we will **not be "Back to normal."** Social distancing will need to be implemented, singing will not be encouraged as there is some scientific evidence to point to this spreading the virus, and we won't be sharing refreshments afterwards (how many hands have touched those biscuits?).

The disciples who were waiting in Jerusalem did not know it at the time, but never again would they return to their fishing or tax collecting. As they waited on him, God was preparing their hearts for a brand new and exciting chapter in their lives. In our own time of waiting – however long it lasts – let us ask God to prepare our hearts for whatever life's adventure holds for us in the future.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak and act powerfully in the name of Jesus – and many were added to the church. Pentecost 2020 may go by in a relatively quiet way. But the day will come when our waiting is over and we will again be called forth to declare the greatness of God. When that day comes, I pray that we will find the "Language of the people" and that we will be equally as effective for God's kingdom.

Blessings

Peter