

Coming out of lockdown

- Are you excited about daily life becoming a bit more like it used to be?
- What church activity are you longing to get back to?
- What do you think God may be asking of us as a church?
- What do you think God may be asking of you as a Christian?
- What one thing do you sense God wants us to prioritise?

On your marks ...

Look up the story of Dr Charles Spangler who began running at the age of 67 and ran the New York City Marathon at 92. Even his death came while he was on a seven-mile run at the age of 95! You can find the story at the end of this blog post <https://www.godweb.org/running.htm>

Charles Spangler chose to focus on being the best runner he could be, not aiming to beat every other marathon runner but to do his best in a chosen activity. Along the way he claimed 85 national records at various distances. In his last competition, he won several gold medals at a Senior Olympics.

- What do you believe God wants his Church to focus on? If it is justice, discipleship, evangelism, prayer or something else, how do the other things help us reach our goal? How do we make room for people to meet Christ in all we do?

Making room for Christ isn't doing a list of things but seeing the face of Christ in those who need our commitment: the poor, the marginalised, the excluded, those who are bombed out of their homes, the oppressed. The list is probably endless.

Dorothy Day, American Roman Catholic who worked with Mother Theresa.

Straining towards the prize

Read Philippians 3: 4b-14

- What stood out to you from this passage?

St Paul had a lot he could take for granted: his tribe, his status as a Pharisee, his Jewish 'righteousness'. But he considered all of that garbage compared to being able to focus on his call to win souls for Christ.

There are many things about being God's people that have crept into our lives over the years: some of them simply traditions that we can't imagine doing without. We have to make sure that our witness isn't damaged by unnecessary extras to being the people of God in Romsey.

Paul chose to win God's approval by not getting distracted from the things that really mattered. He was prepared to focus on God's call to the exclusion of all else.

But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3: v13b-14

Is that too much to ask?

Throwing off the shackles

Does the end of lockdown feel like someone is loosening the shackles for you? Has the pandemic been something that hindered or did it give time and opportunity to refocus on God's call to us?

Our reading from the letter to the Hebrews talks about being surrounded by a 'great cloud of witnesses' (12:1). Think of the people who cheered you on in your faith who have now gone to glory. Imagine what they would say to cheer you on again if they were able?

Someone once suggested that arriving in heaven would be like finishing the Olympic marathon and, as you arrive in the stadium with the tape in sight, the whole crowd of witnesses would rise to their feet and cheer you on to the end. What an image!

- Is there anything that has shackled and hindered you from running as God intended?
- How do we help each other to be holy and focussed on God's call?
- What excites you about how Church might look if we fix our eyes on Jesus and run the race for him?

Where next?

Re-read Hebrews 12:1-2

let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Pray for clarity of mind and purpose. We would love to hear what you believe God is saying.