

## Changing Times

After 18 months of Covid, a 57-year-old song seems as relevant today as it did in 1964 – “The Times They Are A-Changin’”, written by Bob Dylan. As individuals, we have changed, families have changed, our communities have changed, so too has Christ Church. How do we face and embrace that change?

In scripture, an angel’s visit is always a harbinger of change; they never come to announce, “Everything’s fine and you’re on the right track”. Angels are always the heralds of new beginnings, inviting us to adventure. Angels announce new departures and the beginning of something whose end is not in view. And the first thing the angel says is that we don’t need to be afraid of change and disruption. “Don’t be afraid,” the angel says. “Get used to different,” Jesus says. “Behold I am doing a new thing”, says Jesus at the end of the book of Revelation.

All that you touch, you change.  
All that you change, changes you.  
The only lasting truth is change.

*Octavia E. Butler*

If the universe is God’s self-portrait, it is clear that God prefers change to stability, loves freedom and creativity, and favours novelty over the familiar. The very process of life guarantees continuing diversification and change. God also favours process over finality, risk over safety, and imperfection over perfection.

One of the positive things to come out of the pandemic for Christ Church is that it has given us an opportunity to reflect on how we do things and this has raised many challenging questions, which we need to think long and hard about.

- When can we safely open our buildings?
  - Do we fall right back into the *old* ways, the ways we’ve always done things?
  - Do we do worship in the same way and at the same time or do we think outside the box and be completely radical?
  - Have we got enough resources and people to do what’s needed?
  - Are there different ways in which we can use our buildings?
- Have we got a clear ‘Vision for Mission’?

Since March 2020, through the worship sheets and Zoom services, we have found new ways to worship and reached new people and people who have not been able to access worship in our buildings for years. As we return to worship in our buildings, how do we incorporate the new ways and the new people into our weekly worship?

Think how we’ve changed since the formation of Christ Church – three magazines have become one, three buildings have become two, one has closed and the remaining two have both changed drastically in recent years. Whatever changes occur in our worship as a result of Covid -19, rest assured we must not be afraid. Change is a natural part of God’s creation, seeds germinate, grow given the correct environment and resources, flower, bear fruit, set seed and some go on for several years to produce more flowers, fruit and seeds of varying quantity and/or quality, no two years the same. However we meet in the future, physically or virtually, rest assured, some things remain the same: we meet to build and maintain relationships with God and the other members of the family of Christ Church South Manchester URC, in Jesus’ name. Amen

**Roger Newton**