Church Without church. April 2020. SB

Here’s a challenge. How do you continue to be a Christian if you cannot meet with others or go to a church? That is where we are in these days of Corvid-19 and the answer for many is “online”. But what if the internet fails? Or less dramatically, what if your computer wears out, or your phone or tablet dies and you can’t get another one? What then?

How would you remind yourself and others about your distinctive identity and calling as a Christian?

Some people already have a thriving home-faith. Others, reliant on Sunday church for many years may not really know how to begin. Whatever the case, here are some really simple ideas for keeping your faith and love of the Lord at the forefront of your life, even without a regular Sunday boost from a church leader. In Britain until now we have not had to learn how to be the Church Dispersed! Now is the time! I pray that when we eventually do come together again your faith and reliance on God may have been deepened by your worship at home.

1. People who are dispersed have to find ways of remembering and passing on the stories, traditions and truths that bind us together. So make sure that you **have a BIBLE** in the house- a real one, not on an electronic device and preferably in modern English. Read it and learn to retell the stories and messages for those who cannot read for themselves. The people of Israel in the Old Testament were often cut off from what they thought was the heart of their worship and the story of the early church in the New Testament is all about small numbers of Christians trying to work out how to be Church under impossible circumstances. There is a lot for us to recognise! God does a lot of work through the uncertain and the weak and rather less with the complacent and the comfortable! What is he teaching us and doing in this situation? Read, listen and learn.
2. **Set aside a special corner** somewhere in your house or garage or garden shed where you can place a few things that remind you of worship and the God we serve. Perhaps a white cloth, a cross, candles, an icon, symbols of the faith, your bible. Visit that place each day, light the candle and connect yourself with God – perhaps with a simple sentence like “Here I am Lord” or a favourite bit of scripture or prayer.
3. Perhaps you have a piano, CD player or hymn book? Learn a few favourites and **sing** them- even if you are tone deaf! God will accept your praise or lament with joy and it might cheer you up too!
4. **On a Sunday prepare a meal** at which you light a candle to remember Christ the Light of the World and that you are called to be a bearer of that light.

* Silently recall the times when your thoughts and words and deeds spoke more of darkness than light and ask God’s forgiveness.
* Repeat aloud the words that were said at your baptism (I turn to Christ, I repent of my sins, I renounce evil)
* Make the sign of the cross on your forehead and on the heads of those with you as a physical memory of Jesus salvation.
* Thank God for the food and all the good things he has given us
* Retell the story of the Last Supper to remember Jesus and what he did for you
* Consume some bread and wine (or whatever you have) as a physical way to help remember that Jesus gave his life for you and all of us.
* Enjoy the food aware that you are consciously in the presence of God and doing something that others are doing too all over the world to keep His memory and our faith alive. If you are with others share your stories of God, the old days of ‘normal Church’ and of people who have inspired you in the faith.

1. **Praye**r is vital. So why not set aside three short times a day? – perhaps something like this:

* 15 minute Coffee Time- Read a chapter from the bible (A Psalm/ extract from a gospel/ Whatever God directs you to). Think about what you have read in relation to yourself and the world and your situation and pray for God to be with and in all you do today and for everything you do to be to his honour and glory. Pray for others
* Lunchtime – 15 minute pause to say the Lord’s Prayer or another of the biblical songs or prayers really slowly and reflectively and offer to Christ the events of your day so far. Pray for others
* Evening – before bedtime- Reflect upon your day- what has honoured God and what has not? Give thanks for the good and repent of the bad. Pray for others

1. **LOVE AS GOD LOVES**: There are just two things to remember. Love God with all you are and all you’ve got and Love other people as much as you love yourself and your family.