

A SERIOUS HOUSE ON SERIOUS EARTH

LIFE GIVING QUESTIONS FOR A LIFE-GIVING CHURCH

Thank you for taking the time in thought and prayer to answer the questions at the end of this document.

The answers are yours and will be treated in confidence, but it might help in your reflections to meet with others to discuss the questions and before sending in your answers.

Some key Scriptures

'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' **John 10: 10**

'On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it'
Matthew 16:18

'Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus' **Acts 8:35**

'So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith' **Acts 6:7**

Some key principles

- The pandemic has had a major effect upon us all causing deep personal and wider re-evaluation. This is worth doing well and carrying forward.
- The Church and its members should always be reflecting on its mission and ministry.
- I am with you until the end of the age. "If you want Jesus to be with you, you need to reflect in which age you are living in." quote by Dutch Theologian Abraham Kuyper.
- Mental health specialists are united in advocating positive imagining and thinking for the future. This is healthy in its own right and also really helpful for responding to the atmosphere of anxiety created by the current waves of uncertainty. If you do this well and commit to following it through it will be very good for you!
- From Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury "We cannot be content to go back to what was before...There needs to be a resurrection of our Common life"

Some suggestions to guide your thoughts

- You may find useful to listen to the talk again, here is the link.
<https://bit.ly/TonParishChurchYT>
- The poem is attached to the email sent with this document.
- Some key trigger phrases from the poem for you to think on are – there might be others that stand out for you also....
 - ❖ *It pleases me to stand in silence here*
 - ❖ *And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep. Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?*
 - ❖ *Since someone will forever be surprising, A hunger in himself to be more serious, And gravitating with it to this ground...*

Some key Thoughts

- *"The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members"* **William Temple**
- *"Church is disciples' plural"* **Paula Gooder**
- *"Churches must choose whether to be passive victims of change or active shapers of change. For the church to grow, it needs to adapt and change"* – **Bob Jackson** from Everyone Welcome to the Future booklet. A read would be recommended.
<https://www.cpas.org.uk/download/3613/everybody-welcome-to-the-future>.

Some key Resources

- *"The World Rebooted"* from TearFund, click on 'start a conversation' for more
https://www.tearfund.org/en/2020/04/the_world_rebooted/
- *"After the crisis, Eleven things to be aware of as we emerge from a pandemic"*. Talk by the Rt Revd Simon Burton-Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge <http://www.simonburton-jones.com/MY%20TALKS/After%20The%20Crisis%20MAY%2028%202020.html>
- *"Standing at the Crossroads - What is the Spirit of Jesus saying to our nations?"*
A moving not to miss message from the Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster,
<https://www.blackburn.anglican.org/news/403/message-from-the-rt-rev-dr-jill-duff-bis>

Your responses will be acted upon, confidentially, seeking a united consensus about what God is saying. We will then respond strategically with the use of our resources: spiritual, human, material, and financial.

Please be encouraged to spend serious time and prayer refining what you think and value.

If you would value a discussion with others about this then please take responsibility for pairing up with someone, using the group you are already part of or ask if you would like a small group to join and reflect with, email the staff team on parishoffice@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk

Please remember to submit your responses to yolanda@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk by 26th July.

Here are the questions for you to reflect upon

- What have the last few months shown us about our own identity as individuals and as a church?
- What is God awaking in you because of all that has happened? (Some said Covid-19 might be a wakeup call)
- What shape of local church would help you better express these hopes?
- What relationships with our community need to be strengthened?
- What has God been saying to you that you feel able to express and share with others?