

- **Welcome**

Welcome to my Romans 15:8 monthly blog for January 2020, the first blog of a New Year and a new decade. As we enter a New Year it's a good time to make plans, resolutions etc. I came across the following resolution in the Church of England Newspaper which I found humorous and challenging:

This year I want to be more like Jesus:

****Hang out with sinners***

****Upset religious people***

****Tell stories that make people think***

****Choose unpopular people as friends***

****Be kind, loving and merciful***

**** Take naps on boats***

Hopefully you have also noticed the CMJ website which hosts the Romans 15:8 network has had a major 'facelift' and upgrade. I hope you will spend some time on the website and will find some of the pages of interest.

If you are visiting the Romans 15:8 page, but have not signed up to join the network please consider doing so- and also please let others know and encourage them to join as well. It is good to be part of a growing network of leaders and ministry practitioners.

Shalom

Alex

- **Teaching reflection of the month** (January)

I had the privilege of preaching at Christ Church, Cockfosters on Sunday 19th January. The Church is using at present the Psalms to create a pattern for its preaching ministry and therefore I was asked to preach on Psalm 51.

Psalm 51 is one of the 7 penitential Psalms (along with Psalm 6, 32, 38, 102, 130 and 143) and the Psalm has an interesting symmetrical structure. A 2 verse introduction is balanced by a 2 verse conclusion. The 4 stanzas which follow consist (in Hebrew) of 5 lines, 3 lines, 3 lines and 5 lines. The Psalm is framed by David's prayer, firstly for himself (:1-2) and then for Zion (:18-19). Psalm 51 is also a key Psalm for exploring issues around forgiveness, failure, confession and restoration. Such issues impact powerfully on all of us.

In order to fully understand this Psalm one needs to know the 'backstory' namely David's adultery with Bathsheba, his betrayal of Uriah and Nathan's courageous and prophetic challenge to David. All of this can be found in 2 Samuel 11-12.

You can view the full sermon via the Christ Church Cockfosters YouTube site.

- **Ministry news update**

In addition to preaching at Christ Church Cockfosters I also led a teaching evening (21st Jan) at the Cambridge Hephzibah group. I spoke on “*Knowing Jesus in His Jewish context*”. I hope to use some of this teaching in a future Olive Press Research Paper.

In terms of staff news, former staff member Rev John Fieldsend was honoured in the New Year honours list for his services to Holocaust (Shoah) Education. Also sadly we heard of the death of former General Director of CMJ Rev Jos Drummond – his funeral takes place on Monday 27th Feb in St Albans. (For more details of John’s award and a tribute to Jos please see the blogs on the CMJ website)

I am also looking forward to a major event coming up in April. CMJ in partnership with the Love Never Fails ministry network is hosting a day conference to commemorate the Centenary of the San Remo Conference. The San Remo conference resulted in a legal framework being established which enabled the implementation of the Balfour Declaration. This day conference will be hosted at the Emmanuel Christian Centre, Marsham Street, Westminster, SW1P 3DW on Saturday 18th April from 12.30 to 5.30pm. There will be a number of key speakers including Dr. Clifford Hill (Editor of Prophecy Today), Andrew Tucker (Director of The Hague Initiative for International Cooperation) and Yanky Fachler (Chairman of the Jewish Historical Society of Ireland, writer and broadcaster). For more details and to register visit the Love Never Fails website- www.lnf.org.uk/sanremo or speak to my colleague Jane Moxon on 01623 883960.

- **Book News**

I have enjoyed reading this month *Mindful Ministry- Creative, Theological and Practical Perspectives* by Judith Thompson and Ross Thompson (SCM Press, 2012). This book begins with the intriguing parable of an eagle who believed it was a chicken! From this starting point the book is a wake-up call, a challenge and an encouragement from fellow ministry practitioners for us all to reflect on our own ministry practice and to be refreshed in it.

The book is structured by focusing on different ministry roles/callings:

- The Apostle (representing Jesus)
- The Holy One (prayer)
- The Pastor
- The Teacher
- The Go-Between
- The Herald (evangelism)
- The Liberator

Each ministry role is explored using Scripture and ends with questions for reflection and discussion. I think this book is worth investing in as a New Year begins. It is perhaps especially relevant to those just 'starting out' in ministry or for those thinking about how they can 'finish well', yet the book will give helpful insights to all in ministry.

- **Monthly Memory Verse**

"Therefore, if you have been raised up with the Messiah, keep seeking the things above- where Messiah is, sitting at the right hand of God." (Colossians 3:1) (Verse taken from the MJFB)