

Reflection Summary – 2 August

Summary by Kristee Boyd, Community Development

1. Have you ever wrestled with God?

I received very interesting answers to this question! Responses ranged from vehemently disagreeing with the idea of 'wrestling with God' at all, to the belief that struggling against God is integral to the relationship. The following points were articulated within the responses:

- I've struggled with waiting for God to lift a burden from me
- I've knowingly wrestled with God (and/or my conscience)
- I've wrestled when things haven't gone my way or when others have apparently been preferred to me
- There have been times when I have really raged against God, I've been so frustrated by my circumstances. Somehow venting my truest feelings in such a situation always leads me to a deeper relationship with God afterwards.
- I've not really wrestled in the sense that I would try to win!
- Sometimes it's been hard to determine the way forward but I wouldn't describe these times as 'wrestling'
- I don't see my relationship with God in terms of a fight at all
- God seems most in evidence in my life in quieter moments, when I feel I'm working in harmony and cooperation with others and my surroundings. This can be difficult to achieve but wrestling is counterproductive.

2. Do you more naturally question or trust?

The two concepts of 'questioning' and 'trust' were brought together in some of the responses. For example, one lady explained that she is more comfortable to explore or to question when she is surrounded by people she trusts, as she is not confrontational by nature. However, the situations that cause her to question are "dogmatic, packaged interpretations of God and Scripture" and sales talk, e.g., "if it's too good to be true it probably isn't!" Another member of St Peter's tends to question in the face of obvious power imbalances, but she is much more collaborative with folk she views as equals or with those she trusts, such as family members. Interestingly, more than one person mentioned that there is a point when we should quit questioning as it becomes painful or a waste of time to continue. However, another mentioned that her perseverance, when she believes that something is right, has been the very reason why she has achieved some of her goals.

One member of St Peter's pointed out that it is critical that we learn to decipher and to follow our own God-given internal 'compass' or gut instincts because it is possible to trust when we shouldn't or to wrestle/question when we didn't actually need to.

3. Who do you feel called to cry out for? To fight for?

I need to point out here that that I was incredibly moved by the responses from St Peter's folk to this question. Every single person mentioned that they have a heart that cries out for those who are defenceless, helpless, powerless or voiceless. One lady said, "those forced into hardship, suffering or indignity by circumstances outwith their control." Another answered, "people who lack power or confidence and have been silenced by society." Yet another mentioned, "I cry out for those for whom I love and for whom I have responsibility (family, friends, patients, colleagues at work and

church) and those making appeals to my conscience. I have fought and would fight again for all of those especially when they are defenceless.”

I don't know about you but it fills me with optimism to know that we have such a solid foundation of character and compassion at St Peter's!

4. What do you think will never be the same again after the pandemic? Personally, for our church, or for society as a whole.

Many changes were identified, both positive and negative. One lady pointed out that it's perhaps easier to ask what will be the same!

Personally:

- Less high street shopping
- Less travel (not least because of increasing awareness about ecological sustainability)
- The way we feel about being in a crowd
- Hopefully a much greener place than we were in before
- Warmer relationships with neighbours and various 'buddies' we've developed in recent months
- A greater appreciation for time with friends and family
- More gratitude for 'the little things' like driving to the beach or having a beer with friends
- Praying more regularly with my husband
- Spending more time outdoors

Church:

- Everyone mentioned that church relationships have become stronger. This has come from the Buddy System as well as Coffee Morning group chats, where we chat with people we didn't previously gravitate towards after services
- Church finances
- Meetings (zoom is surely easier and better economically than travelling to and heating up a room)
- Taking anything for granted
- The sense that we can sit back and leave the hard work to others
- Appreciation for a church community that we belong to

Society as a Whole

- Zoom for meetings and for other forms of work and creativity, e.g., public theatre being shared online, which has given voices to many, including writers that did not have access to such a platform before
- General Practice is sadly in danger of losing some of the personal touches, intimate relationships and fighting for the underprivileged which have been so valued in the past. I will fight to retain those
- The loss of a sense of security for many people, in terms of financial stability but also in terms of physical, mental and social wellbeing
- Ease in large gatherings (trust in the population's collective 'common sense' and 'responsibility' is demonstrably naïve and ill-founded)
- Ease around strangers. There is now a constant 'backing away' from others in any public space that I fear will continue

5. What are you most looking forward to about the return to our church?

Everyone is looking forward to being physically together in one space! Some are looking forward to singing and making music together again (although aware that this might be a while away). Others mentioned that it will be positive to get to know Nick in person as he leads St Peter's into the next chapter. New working relationships will surely continue, as well as new roles and an increased sense of direction and purpose.

A few people mentioned that they will miss the intimacy of Zoom coffee in small groups together. One lady joked that she will miss being able to sip coffee during the service!