

16<sup>th</sup> April, 2025

Dear Friends,

I am writing this in the middle of Holy week even though the plan it relates to does not commence until 1<sup>st</sup> June.

Every year the journey to Easter and the celebrations of resurrection takes on a different focus and this year the theme that recurs is that resurrection is not just about Jesus, nor about life after death, but about the way resurrection calls us to step into the new situation about which we know little or nothing.

Recently I read a quotation from one of my mother's favourite spiritual guides, a man called Oswald Chambers.

He wrote:

'Beware of harkening back to what you once were, when God wants you to be something that you have never been'

For someone on the verge of retirement that has a very specific application, but in fact it is part of the universal call to all believers. It is also about a step into empty space. The excitement, and apprehension come precisely because we do not know, and cannot predict what this future will include.

I have always found that idea of an open future, a clean slate, a new possibility to be an encouraging thing. We cannot rewrite the past, however much we might wish to do so, but we can embrace this new future in hope. The hope comes not from the novelty value or the technological gimmickry, but from the sense of stepping into a vast new space inhabited only by a God of love who walks before us and calls us to follow.

That future will be mixed as so much of life is mixed. Some things we will welcome, and some we would prefer to avoid. In all of it the God who comes to us in Jesus will be present and active, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. If Christ leads then we can embrace this vast new possibility with hope and confidence.

I want to take this opportunity to offer a word of thanks to my colleagues on the staff, to all who have held office in the circuit and the different churches, and to everyone who has shared the work of being disciples in this time and place.

I pray that we will be able to step into this new future that God has for us and receive all the blessings it brings, and so become a source of blessing to others.

God bless,

Chris