



WEEKLY WELCOME – 'AT HOME'

11th April 2021

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A year ago, I took on the task of producing the Weekly Welcome – 'At Home'. I didn't realise that I would still be doing it a year later! Thank you for all the positive comments that have been received and for the encouragement this has been. I would add a big thank you to Jim, Edwin and Maureen who have contributed to the news sheet. Thanks, too, to others who have made contributions. I would like to thank Julia who has done the lion's share of the photocopying and stuffing envelopes for those who received it by post.

As restrictions ease and we get back to meeting at church, I believe now is the time to stop producing the Weekly Welcome in this format. I am keen to get back to retirement as the church looks to the future. The last edition of the Weekly Welcome at Home will be on 18th April. Geoff

This Sunday: Jim Collins – Ephesians 4:1-6 – Unity and Diversity in the Church.

If you have contacted Barrie Chivers and are intending to be present on Sunday please wear warm clothing. The heating will be on but advice on Covid security suggests that good ventilation is provided which will mean it will be cooler in the church.

Next Sunday: The speaker for next Sunday, 18th April, will be Darrell Holmes whom the Leadership Team members have been talking to with reference to future ministry in the church. The 10.30 a.m. service that day will be live streamed as usual, but we would encourage as many people as feel able to attend in person. We are looking at how safely to increase the number of places available in church and at the possibility of holding a second service later the same day if there is sufficient demand. In order to facilitate the planning, please contact Barrie as soon as possible to let us know you would like to attend church on that day.

Just a thought ... Beginning and end – Jim Collins

I moved to Brixham from Reading in 1979, and it didn't take long to realise that Torbay has a favourable climate compared to Berkshire. Over the years (since living in Devon) I have often commented on the need to 'get the camera quickly!' – to take photos of any snowfall before it melts, aided by the mild coastal temperatures.

I recall one morning, waking up to see a good covering of snow on the road. At first glance I was hesitant to take the car out and thought I may have to walk to where I needed to go.

Finally, I decided to use the car, and carefully drove to the first junction at the end of our road. I then noticed the road ahead was clear of snow – with just a few patches of slush!

This incident reminded me about those times in life, when the way we initially see and perceive things may not be as they really are. We may assume the worst while waiting for exam or health-test results. We may not believe the best in someone, just because they disappointed us once.

There will be many situations we encounter, when we will not know the end from the beginning – but *Jesus does*. He understands and sees the big picture in every circumstance, even during those times when we are so caught up in the immediate, that we can't focus on the next step forward.

In the last book of the New Testament, Jesus is described as the 'Alpha and the Omega.' (The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) He is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." (Revelation 22:13)

God is the beginning of everything and the end of everything. He originated His plan of rescue and salvation for our lives and He will see it through to the close. He sees things as they are and as they will be.

Paul the apostle said we can be confident of this - "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6)

When we seek God; we can trust Him to lead us and reveal His perfect will for our lives, knowing that - "Where God guides - He will provide!"

Isaiah the prophet spoke God's message proclaiming, "I am God, and there is no other ... there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand ..." (Read Isaiah 46:9-10)

As we slowly move out from the pandemic lockdown restrictions and see light at the end of the tunnel, there will still be many occasions in the future where we will not see the full picture or know the final outcome. However we can draw strength from our Lord God, who is Sovereign and all powerful, and entrust every circumstance and each day to Him - from beginning to end.

Two very different testimonies – from Edwin Pocock

Amina

A Nigerian kidnapped by Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram, was told to renounce Christ or be killed. She refused – but lived to tell the tale. It wasn't the first time Amina had encountered the extremists. The Christian Institute reports that her family was first attacked by Boko Haram in 2012, when 20 militants broke into her home and tried to make her husband and children deny their Christian faith. When they refused, they were attacked, one after another. "My husband died immediately", said Amina, "but two of my children were later rushed to hospital and their lives were saved by God's grace, after surgery."

Five years later, the terrorists came again. This time, Amina was hit three times when they shot at the bus she was on. "They killed all the men immediately and then took the women to a forest where they were kept for 8 months. All of us suffered from trauma, fear and anxiety". The women were all told to become Muslims, but they refused and continued secretly praying and worshipping God, even when threatened with execution. She said: "By the special grace of God, we all stood in

faith. For us, to live is Christ, and to die is gain". The women would rather be killed than turn from Jesus.

Amina was eventually released, and was helped to recover by a trauma healing programme run by Christian charity Open Doors. She said: "after the programme, I got peace for my family and myself. I thank God for that encouragement that they gave to me at that time".

Nigeria is one of the worst countries in the world for persecution of Christians, so bad that some have called it genocide.

Carrie Underwood

Seven-times Grammy winning country singer Carrie Underwood's new album *My Saviour*, out on 26th March, is perfect for Easter. Following her hit Christmas record *My Gift*, which topped the UK and US country charts last year, it is just as open about her faith in the one whose life we celebrate at Christmas and Easter.

My Saviour, Jesus, has always been central to her life, and Carrie says making this album has been a lifelong dream: "it's been such a blessing to make music like this, inspirational music that is near and dear to my heart. These two albums have been on my musical bucket list since the beginning of my career and were planned long before the events of the past year, but somehow it feels like the perfect time to share these beloved songs with the world". She adds: "When you think about the meaning behind easter, it is about so much thankfulness to Jesus. That is what this album is about."

Carrie has faced huge opposition to her Christian faith in the 15 years since she rose to fame as winner of *American Idol*. But instead of backing off, she has continued praising Jesus in front of millions, and sharing her faith with her fans. She once said: "I am a Christian person, and I do love the Lord, and I feel no matter who you are, what you believe, how you live your life, it's not my place to judge. I don't have that power. I don't want that power. It's my place to love and to show God's love to other people, even if they don't live a life like I live."

In a video last year, she explained her purpose in life: "I want the people in my life that I love, to know that they are loved by God. They are wanted. God wouldn't have made any of us if He didn't want us." With tears in her eyes, she continued: "I feel like that's part of my purpose in the world. No matter who you are or what you've done, if I could just make everybody feel that they are loved, I feel like that's my job, God has real unconditional love for His children."

Thank You:

"Very many thank for the beautiful flowers sent for my special birthday." Myra Hingston

I have taken on the task of collating the Weekly Welcome – At Home whilst it is needed. If you do have any news or words of encouragement do email me at geoff.andrews61@gmail.com or telephone and leave a message on 01803 854718. Space is limited but I will try to incorporate these. Geoff