

THE TIMES THEY ARE-A -CHANGIN

A Reflection by Mal Breeze CRCW – 41st Thought for the Week

Dear Friends, welcome to my 41st thought for the week during lockdown which is a reflection I've written for the URC and I also used it as my reflection in our communion service this morning and I share it with you now.

The words of the title song and album "The Times They Are a-Changin" written by Bob Dylan back in 1964 were true then and they are certainly very true for us today 57 years on. Perhaps even more applicable given the events of the last 18 months of Covid-19.

As individuals we have changed, families have changed, our communities have changed and so too have our churches and many of us have had to re-think how to carry out our 'ministry'. As communities we have endured lockdown after lockdown not knowing when they will end, families have been kept apart for long periods and our churches had to close.

The word lockdown has tripped off everyone's tongue faster than it takes to melt a knob of butter on a hot potato and has often caused resentment and conflict not only within communities but also within the church as we have explored what life might be like after lockdown. Whilst there will be a New Reality our Mission will of course remain the same. We will therefore need to seek and find new ways of being church carrying out our mission and ministry in that new Reality.

For many including myself the last 18 months has seemed like a marathon and having walked, run and cycled marathons over the years I can speak from experience but I would certainly prefer to take part in a marathon again than go through the experience of the of the past 18 months again.

One of the positive things to come out of the Pandemic for the church is that it has given us an opportunity to reflect on how we do things and this has raised many challenging questions, hot potatoes which we need to think long and hard about.

These challenges include the following but it's not an exhaustive list;

- When can we safely open our buildings?
- Have we got enough finances to carry on or not carry on as the case may be?
- Do we do worship in the same way and at the same time or think outside the box and be completely radical?
- Do we fall right back in to the old ways, the ways we've always done things?
- Have we got enough resources and people to do what's needed
- Are there different ways in which we can use our buildings?
- Have we got a clear 'Vision for Mission'?

Then there is the wider question for Synods and the United Reformed Church as whole, do we have too many churches given the reducing numbers in our congregation and the number of ministers'? This is a very big hot potato but it's one we need to take hold of and seriously explore "Do we need all our Church buildings"?. Prayer, discernment and working in partnership and ecumenically are the keys to unlock the future of how we move on and be more effective in our 'Mission and Ministry'.

So how do we move on?

Timothy Ch2 says, "you have fought the good fight so to speak, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith" we have run the race and now things are easing up we need to stay focussed, find new ways of doing things as Missional Disciples of Jesus Christ and discover how we work Together "To Make A Difference".

In the words of David Bowie's song (Changes) we need to "turn and face the strange" "time may change me but I can't change time". Well time has changed us and the communities we serve and it's now up to us to find new ways of being church in times which are unknown, we need to take risks and face the difficult questions head on. We can do this in the assurance that Jesus our risen saviour will be with us every step of the way to the very end of the age.

Make your own prayer for your church and your community.

This week think of ways in which you and your church can make a difference in the new reality when we are able to open once more.

So until next time, Keep well and Keep safe,

Shalom my friends, Shalom.

