

Saturday 17th November 2018



## Thanks and Hope

Many of the churches I have been working with are celebrating their anniversary at the moment. As part of this we have been looking at Matthew 1:1-17, the lineage of Jesus Christ. It's interesting that these are the opening verses of the New Testament – that we start a new phase in the Biblical narrative by recapping the Old Testament, and linking the events that will unfold in the New Testament to the events that have already unfolded in the Old Testament.

At a chapel anniversary, that is just what we are doing: remembering the story of God in that place, and looking with hope to the story that will unfold in the future. Many small churches where the congregations are getting older and smaller may feel that the past is the only thing to focus on, remembering what God has done in the past – but that excludes hope of what God could do in the future.

The church is in an exciting place. Many fear the so-called decline and worry that the church will cease to exist in a few years, yet I have hope and excitement that God is going to do something incredible. That doesn't mean that many churches won't close, or that church as we know it won't change, but it does mean that I have hope in something new that God is doing. After all, there is only resurrection and new life if there is first a death. The death of what we know is painful and frightening for many, especially at the time when we gather to celebrate the anniversary of a church, yet there should still be hope for what is to come.

The hymn *Lord for the years* by Timothy Dudley-Smith gives thanks for all that God has done in the past, and a modern hymn by Rend Collective, *Build your kingdom here*, speaks of hope for the future and setting the church on fire with the Holy Spirit.

God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,  
we thank you for all that you have done for us in the past;  
for the stories of the faithful who you have walked faithfully alongside;  
for the stories of our own churches;  
for being with us on our journey.  
We thank you for all that you are doing  
in our lives, our churches, our communities today.  
We look with hope and anticipation towards what you are going to do  
in our lives, our communities and churches in the future.  
God of yesterday, today and tomorrow –  
Thank you.  
Amen

Prayers for November by Revd Claire Rawlinson  
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