

After the lockdown...

Galatians 5:22-26

I think this is the longest day of the year, and midsummer's day is on the 24th. Summer has officially started, and in no time we'll soon be noticing the nights drawing in and it will soon be Winter!

It has certainly been odd over these last months as we've gone from Winter, which it was when the lockdown started, through Spring and now we are in summer.

With the news that there is a limited relaxing of lockdown regulations, it has been good to hear from different people earlier about what they've missed most during the lockdown, what they've learned, and what they are looking forward to most when the regulations ease further.

That's something we could all think about, not forgetting the difficult things, and the sacrifices, those have been real and are ongoing. But thinking about the positives. What have we learned; what do we look forward to in the future.

A few Sundays ago we celebrated Pentecost, that special time in the Church's year when the gift of the Holy Spirit is remembered. The Spirit Who comes to comfort, and inspire and give hope, and to challenge.

We look to the future, and we begin to think about what we have learned and how we might put those gifts to the use of our church, our community, our family and our friends. What came to my mind wasn't just all the practical things that people have learned – and we will certainly need to have all of these gifts in the Church as things move on. What came to my mind was this little passage from a letter that a man called Paul wrote to one of the first Christian churches, in a part of the world we today call Turkey. It's believed that Paul's letter to the Galatians is the first document in what we call the New Testament part of the Bible, written before other letters, and even written before the gospels that tell the story of Jesus.

Paul wanted the women and men of those early churches to think about what it would mean to be a follower of Jesus, a Christian, in those very difficult days when the Church was very new. He

knew they'd need practical gifts, and food would be shared, and money would be share. But he also knew that those first followers of Jesus would need to use other gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit, and that when they used those gifts, the gifts would be seen, and heard, and felt, and that people's lives would be made better.

What were the gifts?

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

That's quite a list. As we emerge from lockdown, we're going to need all of them. How many of them do you have?

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Amen