



THINK ON THESE THINGS..... (our contributor this morning is Brian Eyles)

Reading: Romans 1: 10-12

I ask that God in his good will may at last make it possible for me to visit you now. For I want very much to see you, in order to share a spiritual blessing with you to make you strong. What I mean is that both you and I will be helped at the same time, you by my faith and I by yours.

Reflection:

The reasons why St. Paul was separated from his friends in the Roman church were quite different from our separation. He said he wanted to go to Jerusalem and, one day, to venture to Spain. He probably sent his letter from somewhere around the Aegean Sea, perhaps Macedonia. We can tell how much he missed the close contact with his friends by the way he sends greetings in Chapter 16.

I am sure we are all grateful for Gerald and those who put together Sunday worship, but you may feel, as I do, it's not the same as being together on a Sunday morning. Most of us probably feel like St. Paul. 'I want very much to see you' he writes. That means, see you face to face, hear your voices, share food and drink. This yearning produces in St. Paul a remarkable declaration. He isn't just an apostle, teacher or spiritual director for them. He says, 'You and I will be helped at the same time, you by my faith and I by yours'.

In those very early days of the church a few were recognized as apostles, but there were no ordained clergy, no bishops, no priests. St. Paul was saying we are all ministers to each other. When the Pandemic crisis is over we are beginning to realize nothing will be quite the same. Changes and innovations will have been accelerated. On line shopping will alter our High Streets, and home working will change our commuting to work in city centres.

Churches like ours will similarly find some accelerated changes. For some time we have been told that leadership must change. We must not be solely dependent on ordained professionals put on pedestals to take most of the praise or most of the blame. Our 'Think on these Things' is a ministry to one another which goes beyond worship services being led by elders. Online teaching and worship may well become more common and we will have to guard against too much separation from each other. Heaven forbid that we might be satisfied with Facebook Fellowship.

We are fortunate at Emmanuel that we already have a good supply of lay leadership. Perhaps the Pandemic crisis will encourage us all to develop even more ministry to one another.

Breath-Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ who has changed and fashioned your church from popes and prophets to medieval monks and reformation scholars, show us how to be your living presence in our twenty first century, ministering to each other with the joy and peace of your Gospel.

