

MINISTER'S LETTER

For everything there is a season ...

Our time together has come to a close. As the conclusion date has approached, I have been provoked to ask: what have we been able to do together? I wonder what you hoped we might have been able to do.

You thought a building project was going to materialise; so did I. My time at Ormond has been overshadowed with the phantom building project. Maybe at this time, though, it is finally closer to realisation than it has been. Nevertheless, it is still a long way off.

The other overshadowing of the six and a half years of my time at Ormond has been the last two years of COVID. This has plunged us all into a kind of suspense where we have not been able to plan and put things into effect, apart from keeping ourselves and each other safe and doing what needed to be done to meet on Zoom or face to face. In and out of lockdown we have gone, like yo-yos. Leadership in such a time has been difficult for us all. So, it has been a time of suspension in a couple of ways.

We have been socialised to expect progress in our lives. The whole premise of contemporary life is progress. So, when we struggle to achieve what we set out to do, life can be a bit bewildering. We are forced to find new inner and outer resources.

As we have recently marked Easter Sunday and then the second Sunday of Easter, I have been struck by the disciples being forced to reimagine themselves, firstly in the death of Jesus and the failure of Israel being politically restored by him. And secondly, as they were invited to reimagine what the Messiah was to be – a suffering one, not a conquering, political figure. The way the gospel writers have written about these transformations in understanding is they have unfolded for them over the course of a few days. In reality this shift in understanding about Jesus may not have been so rapid. And yet often there are light-bulb moments for us when everything does become suddenly clear.

The pattern the disciples were called to be by Jesus as the events of Easter loomed was one of waiting and being watchful. The women especially were watchful, and the disciples were told by the risen Jesus to wait in Jerusalem – the place where everything seemed to fall apart.

The temptation in the wake of all Ormond's waiting might be to rush ahead now that circumstances are changing. This may not be the right thing to do, though. If you are watchful, it will be clear when the time is right.

Our progress-expectant mindset believes that we are masters and mistresses of our own destinies. But as we get older and, hopefully, wiser we know this to not be true and, indeed, there is a right time for everything and it may not be according to our own timetable or priorities.

As you enter this next phase of your life as a congregation, I pray you will be watchful and attentive, to each other and to the Spirit in your midst. If you can manage to do this, the way forward will become clear and you will be able to go forward together.

The Wisdom writer concludes: *I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; ... I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is;*

May you find peace in this knowledge.

Andrew