

# Holyhead Herald

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The magazine of Holyhead Road United Reformed Church, Coventry

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## From our Minister



Whether you encounter it online, on the television, in your newspapers or through what (thankfully) seems to be a reduced amount of paper coming through our doors, you cannot escape marketing. And there is an art to marketing, or it is a science? The words used; the psychology of the proposition when someone wants you to purchase something; the images added to increase its attractiveness. All of these combine to create a message that here is something – from a car to a house to some new clothes, a new gadget or

device, a game or even a diet – that you just can't afford to let pass by. Something you NEED.

I appreciate that companies need to make money to pay wages and in an economy such as ours with much more choice than some in the world there have to be adverts to lay out that choice in front of the consumer. People have choice not just in what they buy but in how they live – and that is where we come in.

How would we describe our product if we were trying to attract people to our churches? Don't tell me we shouldn't think like this. The Great Commission of Jesus, who told his followers [Matt 28.19] that they should make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Trinity, means that we have a duty to try to put the Good News in the hands of everyone. It's a problem I have been grappling with when publicising the Group worship podcast\*, these last three months. How hard to sell? I know that in this form this worship has not been accessible to everyone. But at the same time there are people who listen to it that we have never seen through our doors. How do we strike a balance when 'marketing' the church, our church? Like our marketers we should be clear not just on the benefits of belonging but also the terms and conditions that apply. It's funny but our faith is something that looks free

and yet can be costly. A regular prayer in this household is we will not offer to God offerings that cost us nothing. How do we 'sell' that idea? How do we make clear the benefits of belonging when God wants his people to live for others and not for themselves? And in all of this we live with the fact that people, including Christians, have a choice.

Questions, but not answers. But questions we should ask ourselves as we try to design the church of the 'new normal' into which we are trying to attract people, or welcome people back, after lockdown and Covid-19 has done its worst. Sadly that still seems some way in the future. In the meantime I pray God's blessing on whichever way your own choices take you.

## **Bill Young**

\* revdbill.uk: Free at the point of delivery. No terms and conditions at all.

## **Quotable Quotes**

We forget that we do not inherit the earth from our parents, but we borrow it from our children. This world is not ours to despoil and destroy. It is the gift of God, and through its fecundity and beauty, is one of the chief ways in which God speaks to all nations. - Andrew Dotchin

Lord, fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff, and nudge me when I've said enough! – Anon

Christianity can be condensed to four words: admit, submit, commit, transmit. – Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger. – Anon

A coincidence is when God performs a miracle and decides to remain anonymous. – Anon

Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% of how you respond to it. – Anon

Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself. – Anon.



*Where was the social distancing?*

## Editorial Comment

There has been a renewed focus on combatting racism recently, particularly (but not exclusively) through the Black Lives Matter movement and in response to the disgraceful murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis. Some of the responses include the circulation of other slogans: “All Lives Matter”, “White Lives Matter”, “Police Lives Matter”. Of course all of those lives matter, but the purpose of those slogans in many cases is not so much to state that fact but, rather, to denigrate the Black Lives Matter campaign. I can’t help feeling that people are, in a very small and insignificant way, experiencing the effects of attention being on others, and not on them. Imagine what that must feel like if it is experienced in far more significant ways day in, day out. For as long as some people are disadvantaged in the workplace, receive unequal treatment at the hands of the police and the criminal justice system, and are verbally abused simply because of the colour of their skin, then we have all got a problem. This isn’t about immigration policy; many of the people in this country whose skin is not white were born and brought up here, and are as British and as patriotic as anybody else.



What would Jesus make of all of this? The first thing to say is that it is far from clear that he had white skin anyway. Secondly, his time on Earth was spent experiencing the impact of the Jewish people being subjected to unfair treatment by the Romans – maybe not racism in quite the form which is currently the focus of attention, but discrimination nonetheless.

Thirdly, we should consider how much of Jesus’s attention was on the rich and famous, and those ‘in control’? “Not much” is the answer, other than to encourage people to set aside those encumbrances for the sake of the Kingdom. His focus was on those who were disadvantaged, down-trodden and sick. He even went as far as to say that “many who now are first will be last, and many who now are last will be first.”

Equally, our focus should be on those who are disadvantaged, for whatever reason; that is true love. It should also be on the root cause of that disadvantage, and not just on dealing with the consequences. That may involve challenging some of our conventions and habits, it may also be uncomfortable at times, but so be it.

***Steve Powell***

