

From Fr Simon,

Dear all

This month's letter is especially for anyone new to St John's or St Mark's. Maybe you have joined us on-line.

The Christian Faith is both simple and complicated. At its simplest we believe that God loves us, that we have turned against God's love, but that through Jesus we are re-connected with God. This is a gift of God to everyone – God will welcome every single person whoever they are and whatever they have done.

If you are attracted to this, the Christian faith, then you might be wondering what to do about it. Well, 2000 years ago great crowds gathered around Jesus to hear him speak, to be healed and simply to be near him.

Christians continue to do these things today; we are delighted to welcome you.

Prayer

Prayer is our conversation with God: we talk and we listen.

Try telling God anything and everything. Ask for what you, and others, and the world need. Say sorry and thank you.

Also try to listen to God: If you can, spend a few moments in stillness and give God space in your heart and mind. God often speaks to us over time, and we may experience this as being changed and transformed, or by seeing things in a new way.

Worship

Worship is when we express and experience who God is, and who we are in relation to God.

So, who is God?

God somehow brought us and all things into existence. God's love is so great that we cannot stop it – whatever we do, and however hard we might try. God's love endlessly restores and brings us home. God is closer to you than your own breath and greater than the universe. Through Jesus God gives himself to the world and gives himself to you.

Many of the poetic words at church try to voice all this.

In words, music, art or any other way, try to express your worship of God.

Gather

Jesus gathered people around him. Even when he was first born there were shepherds at the manger. God calls you individually and also gathers us together around Jesus. This can be wonderful, but it can be difficult because other people, including Christians, can be very annoying and challenging. You see, we are all so different, and we all believe slightly different things, and none of us are perfect.

Try to meet up with other Christians – coming to church (or attending on-line) is a good way to do this.

Read

Reading is another way that we can hear God and learn about God. The bible is essential reading for Christians, but can be a bit confusing for the beginner. The Gospel of Mark is a good place to start, it is the story of Jesus in a fast and action-packed way, it tells some of the things Jesus said and did. Just try to read a little bit at a time, maybe before you pray.

There are lots of other books to read too, I can recommend "Everyday God" by George Guiver and "What is Christianity?" by Rowan Williams.

Others

When someone asked Jesus which rule is the most important, Jesus replied by saying, love God with everything that you are and love others as you love yourself. Loving others in this sense means to believe

that they are as special and wonderfully made as you, and to work towards a world where all people have dignity and their needs are met.

Think and pray about what you can say and do to make the world a better place, and try to doing those things in God's name.

The Christian faith is a lifelong path; do join us, and countless others, as we make our way along it, travelling towards and into God. And if you want to meet with me to discuss your faith or anything else, then just ask.

God bless