

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Sunday 06 July: 10:30 AM.

Malcolm speaking

Monday 7th July: *Mentoring training*

Sunday 13 July: 10:30 AM.

Malcolm speaking

Sunday 20 July: 10:30 AM. Dr

Rolan Monje is our visiting speaker from the Manila ICOC.

Sunday 27 July: 10:30 AM. *Malcolm speaking*

Sunday 03 August: 10:30 AM. *Malcolm speaking*

Sunday 10 August: 10:30 AM. *Malcolm speaking*

Sunday 17 August: 10:30 AM. *Osagie speaking*

Sunday 24 August: 10:30 AM. *Church service*

Sunday 31 August: 10:30 AM. *Church service*

Monday 1st September: *Mentoring training*

3-5 October: Young Professionals' retreat



Be reassured. Even if no one else gets it, Jesus understands your loneliness. But, how important is loneliness?

Loneliness is dangerous

Loneliness is killing us. Literally. According to research cited by Linneman, the health impact of chronic loneliness is equivalent to smoking fifteen cigarettes a day. That's staggering. What's the issue for the church?

We are called to represent the heart of God to the world so that people will be drawn to Him. If we neglect the needs of the lonely in our congregation, our culture will not reflect God's nature, and we will be in danger of putting people off following Jesus.

"People reject Christianity not primarily because of our doctrine but because of our lack of intentionality in relationships." p. 2

Community is healthy

We live in a culture that preaches personal autonomy—be yourself, protect your time, keep your space. But God's people *belong*—to Him, to each other, to a shared story and a shared identity. Not as isolated souls, but as a family.

God created Adam and said, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). When Israel was chosen, it wasn't to be a collection of individuals with private faith. It was a people called out, a community shaped by covenant (Exodus 3:10).

The New Testament continues that theme, even more powerfully. Through Jesus, we are not just saved—we are joined.

"We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Romans 12:5

The Loneliness Cure - Part 1

Recently I read the book "Why do we feel lonely at church?" By Jeremy Linneman. I believe our congregation is loving and accepting, but even so, it is possible to be lonely, and all the more so as the church grows larger. With that in mind I want to share a two-part set of articles based on my notes from the book.

Jesus understands our loneliness

Was he lonely? Much of the time he was misunderstood by his best friends, rejected (even by his family) and ostracised by the establishment. On top of all that he went to the cross utterly alone.

"[Jesus] suffered profound loneliness so that we could belong forever." – Jeremy Linneman

Think about that. Not just connected—members of one another. That's belonging. That's commitment. That's family.

Resisting the pressures

We are under pressure to conform to the world's standards—"me first". The church is not immune to the possibility of community becoming casual and relationships becoming thin.

The effects of COVID might still be with us. Stats from the USA tell us that during just eight months of COVID-19 lockdowns, Americans logged 244 fewer hours with other people than in the eight months before. I doubt the figures in the UK are much different. COVID isolation eroded the depth and strength of our connections. Have they recovered? Fully?

Bringing hope

But there is hope. More than that—there is purpose.

"The healthiest, most satisfied individuals in life are those who have a place to belong." P15

Belonging isn't just a perk of faith. It's the point. When Jesus hung on the cross, He didn't just die for sin. He created a new family. With some of His final breaths, He looked at His mother and said to John, "Here is your mother... here is your son" (John 19:26-27). He made sure even in death that no one was left alone.

God's very nature is relational. Psalm 68:6 says, "God sets the lonely in families." And that's what the church is—a spiritual family rooted in Christ, intertwined like the roots of an ancient tree.

"Above the surface, we are individual, unique, freestanding persons. Beneath the surface, we are interconnected by our root system, with all the branches leading back to a single root, which is Christ." p. 23 (see John 15:4)

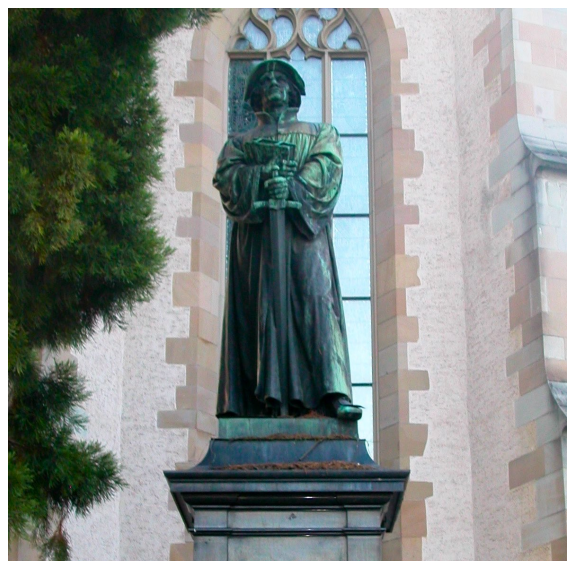
In a world obsessed with independence, the gospel invites us into something radically better: interdependence. Not just attending church. Not just believing the right things. But belonging—to God and to one another.

Next week, we'll look at practical steps we can take to strengthen the culture of belonging in our church. Healing starts not by trying harder, but by rooting deeper.

Your brother, Malcolm

This week's quiz

I took this photograph on a visit to Zurich. Who is this person, why is he important to Protestants, and what did he think happened at the Lord's Supper? Answers next week.



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