

## Letter from the Vacancy Convenor

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Dear Members,

The following verses come from HEBREWS Chapter 10: Verses 19 – 25

*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

*Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

*Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

In today's wired world, everyone is getting connected. They have e-mail addresses, mobile numbers, and work numbers, text messages, WhatsApp, messenger etc. But no matter how connected we are getting technologically; we are getting less and less connected to the people around us.

Part of that has to do with the pandemic we have endured for a year now.

You and I were not made to live that way. The Bible says in Genesis 2:18, *"It is not good for man to be alone."* You were made for relationships. You were made for connections. There is a universal need to belong. From the moment we are born, we long for the warmth of loving other people. There is a desire to belong and to be accepted by other people. There is a need to connect at the deepest level.

The Bible has a word for that: it is called fellowship. Fellowship is extremely important for one reason: we get discouraged. Life has a way of wearing us down.

Proverbs 17:22 says, *"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength."*

There are going to be times that we have a broken spirit. There are going to be times where we just do not have much strength.

Now, when we get discouraged, what do we do?

We complain. We feel sorry for ourselves. Sometimes we allow ourselves to get bitter.

Sometimes we are so discouraged that we stop engaging with our church. It is ironic that we do this because times of discouragement are the times that we most need to be the church.

There is a book in the Bible that has a lot to say about encouragement. It is the book of Hebrews. This book was written to Jewish Christians who were probably undergoing fierce persecution. It appears that many of them were ready to give up the struggle, and to go back to their old way of life. It was a group of people who were struggling with discouragement.

As we begin to sense the arrival of spring and a thawing of winter so too do we sense an end to the restrictions and the pandemic. What this should mean for each of us is once again a greater opportunity to re-engage with those in our church fellowship. So, I want to encourage you to take some time to prepare your hearts and minds for that time when we can be back together again. Prepare to be encouraged but perhaps more importantly, prepare to be an encourager to those around you for in doing this we fulfil God's desire for us as a congregation.

In His Service

Alan Johnston