

## Pastoral Letter October 2011

### Change and no change

The theme of this pastoral letter (as you might guess) is prompted by the fact that, for the third time in less than six years, we are meeting in a different venue for our church services. We have been subject to a further change, though in each case meeting in essentially the same area, for which we are thankful.

*Changes in life should always prompt thought and reflection.* It is stating the obvious to say that we are surrounded by change. We are aware of it all the time. We ourselves change – growing older; moving home; having additions to or, by way of bereavement, subtractions from our beloved family circle; changing jobs, or retiring from work; experiencing ups and downs in health; and so on. None of us is immune, nor can we expect to be. And as well as such things as these, everything else seems to change – the weather, the moral state of the nation (sadly, from bad to worse), the peace of the world, the financial markets, the condition of ‘the church’, scientific and medical ‘advances’, and on the list goes.

Putting all of this together (along with much else which we have not said), the hearts of the true people of God could easily begin to fear. Let them not do so! Why not? Because, first and foremost, of this most fundamental and glorious truth: *God does not change!* He cannot change. It is impossible for him to change. Why? Because he is God. Scripture insists upon the changelessness of God. It is the truth of his ‘immutability’. He is the eternal God: ‘from everlasting to everlasting you are God’ (Psalm 90:2). The ‘God of the covenant, Triune Jehovah’ declares of himself, ‘For I the LORD do not change’ (Malachi 3:6). The Lord ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever’ (Hebrews 13:8). The third person of the Trinity is ‘the eternal Spirit’ (Hebrews 9:14). This God is our faithful, unchanging, immovable rock. He is our Maker, Sustainer, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and our ‘portion forever’ (Psalm 73:26). What supreme comfort and joy is to be found in this truth. ‘The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms’ (Deuteronomy 33:27).

And there is more. *The Bible never changes.* It is ‘the word of our God (which) will stand for ever’ (Isaiah 40:8). It is never to be altered. It never goes out of fashion. *The glorious gospel of God’s grace never changes.* It is the ‘eternal gospel’ (Revelation 14:6). It never changes either. God continues to invite helpless, needy and unworthy sinners to himself. The gospel offer is as wide and as free as ever. Wonderfully, ‘the blood of Jesus (God’s) Son cleanses us from all sin’ (1 John 1:7) – and the force of that verb means ‘goes on cleansing’.

*God’s purposes and promises never change.* He has established his purposes from before the creation of the world, ‘saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’’ (Isaiah 46:10). We may rely on all that God is doing. He cannot be taken by surprise. He is wise in all that he does (including, not least, with his people). We may live our lives in humble confidence in him, ‘standing on the promises of God’. He does all things well – and will be seen to have done so, at the end of all days.

So let us not be fearful. May we be kept from ever-lurking foes such as unbelief, distrust, cowardice, lethargy or pessimism. Let us learn (through grace) to ‘praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that’s to come’. We are not on our own. He does not leave us to ourselves. True - these are days of exceedingly small things. Fear not! ‘Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases’ (Psalm 115:3).