

Lent 2021

**Dear Parishioners,**

On Ash Wednesday, 17 February, we start our Lenten journey towards Easter, the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. Easter Sunday has been described as the ultimate Sabbath, the Rest and indeed the salvation of God. The purpose of Lent is for us to prepare ourselves for something greater than our current reality.

The last year, and the year to come will be unusual in many ways. 2020 is often hailed in the media as the 'year when everything changed,' and we are still in the midst of that unfolding new world. Desiring to be able to make sense of how we got here as a global society, and where we are going, I long for things to slow down so that the essence of Being can again be savoured, appreciated, and primed for what is to come. I have therefore selected for this year's Lent course the book, *'Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus'* (InterVarsity Press, 2016), by Christopher Smith and John Pattison.

The book is written around the metaphor of a meal, a Eucharistic meal, whereby community come to together to think about ethics, the ecology, and the economy, and discuss what it would look like for society and in particular the church to slow down in order to better live the Biblical model of wholeness, patience, the practicing of Sabbath, etc. in a world driven by an ever greater pace of consumption.

It is also for this reason that a temporary labyrinth will be put up in the church garden for parishioners to walk and prayer, slowly, through the many turns of this ancient way of meditation.

As we embark on what could be a life-changing journey, I invite you to join, and to tag some people along with who you can share, experiment, and bounce off some ideas of what true community is about.

The Lent course and discussions will be held on Wednesday mornings and evenings throughout February and March. If you would like to read along, a few copies of 'Slow Church' is on sale with Nomawethu in the parish office. Here is an excerpt:

*High-speed Internet. Rapid rewards. Quick Trips. Fast food. Fast... church? The church is often idealized (or demonized) as the last bastion of a bygone era, dragging its feet into new moralities and new spiritualities. We guard our doctrine and our piety with great vigilance. But we often fail to notice how eagerly we're embracing, in the structures and practices of our churches, a culture of unreflective speed, dehumanizing efficiency and dis-integrating isolationism. In Slow Church, Chris Smith and John Pattison invite us out of franchise faith and back into the kingdom of God, where people know each other well and love one another as Christ loved the Church.*

I would love to tell you how I first came across the idea of 'Slow Church' and the need for an authentic expression of our faith in order for our sense of Being to be restored, come to fruition, and for us to live more joyfully.

*Rev Eben*