

## TAKE TIME OUT - Pastoral Retreat

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### Monthly Message – October 2021

Reverend Janice A. Morgan MA. BSc.

**Ruth 1:16-17** <sup>16</sup> But Ruth said, “Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried.”

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**The** book of Ruth has so many lessons in just four chapters to teach us. First we have the background to a beautiful love story that will leave you weeping. Elimelech, of Bethlehem in Judah, becomes a refugee of famine in Moab, a country of false gods. He has a wife, Naomi, and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites, having originated in Ephraim. Elimelech dies and Naomi is left a widow with two sons. They both marry Moabite wives; Orpah and Ruth, but tragically, some years later, Mahlon and Chilion also die. Naomi and her two daughters-in-law are now without any male protection or providence. Naomi decides to return to her homeland of Bethlehem in Judah. She urges Orpah and Ruth to go back to their families to be provided and cared for. Eventually, Orpah, agrees to go back to her mother’s house but Ruth clings to Naomi refusing to leave her, vowing to adopt her God and stay with her until she dies. Naomi sees the devotion in Ruth’s eyes and they return to Judah together. Read on and you will discover the faithfulness of both women and the loving hand of God protecting and providing for their every step. *What story would our book tell?*

**Firstly**, Naomi remained True to the convictions of her faith among people who worship false gods in a foreign land. She was a good witness to her daughters-in-law and generously caring toward their wellbeing. Under such cruel circumstances of multiple loss and tremendous grief, she could have become introspective and selfish. Yet, Naomi considers the wellbeing of Orpah and Ruth before her own, despite their pagan beliefs. She lays out the grizzly facts before them: her age, no male ancestor...so no voice or standing in the community, and no means to provide a living for herself, let alone anyone else! Naomi releases them from any obligation to look after her, urging them to seek family help. *If we found ourselves bereft of everything, with no one to turn to for help, would we be so generous?*

**Secondly**, Ruth chose not to return to her family like Orpah but remain with her mother-in-law. She could have made life easy for herself but chose not to. Ruth recognised the inner goodness of Naomi and was drawn to travel with her to a foreign land. So compelling was Naomi’s nature that Ruth denounces her former religious beliefs, leaves a place of family safety and travels into the unknown, trusting in a God she did not yet know. Orpah chose the way of worldly reasoning, but, Ruth chose the way of faith. *Is our witness one of goodness, generosity and selflessness?*

**The** autobiography of Paul Yongi Cho, ‘Dream Your Way To Success’ outlines his pagan religious beginnings. His daily life was full of ritual, apologising to this or that god. One such ritual was required to the appropriate god if he stubbed his toe on a stone or rock,

before continuing his journey. When Paul lay dying of tuberculosis isolated in a solitary room, not caring if he lived or died, a young girl visits him and proceeds to read from the Bible. Paul is not a Christian, he does not know the girl, and does not want her to read to him, especially not from the Bible! However, she ignores his rude and dismissive behaviour and perseveres, sitting at his bedside every day reading the Bible. Eventually, he gives in whereupon she gives him her Bible and leaves. Paul never sees her again, but from that moment is changed, healed and forms the largest church in the world! *What false gods might have invaded our lives, keeping us busy with meaningless rituals?*

Both Naomi and Ruth were ordinary people living life as best they could in the face of suffering beyond their control. We too will be plagued by grief, pain, and suffering beyond our control. For Naomi and Ruth, their faithfulness to and trust in God provided a happy ending beyond their wildest dreams. Oh I do love a happy ending...don't you? **Amen!**

Yours in Christ Jesus, Janice.

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**Poem: FAMILIES** by Sarah Piplock

Some families are big,  
Some families are small,  
But no matter what size  
It's the same for them all

Families are fathers that frown and say  
"We didn't do things like that in my day!  
That shirt's rather bright  
That skirt's far too tight  
Now tell me again where you're going tonight."

Families are mothers, who flap and fuss  
"Hurry up now or you'll miss the school bus!  
Straighten your tie, tidy your hair  
Are you sure those big ear-rings are what you can wear?"

Families are brothers that joke and tease  
And when you're not looking they give you a squeeze.  
They think they're much bigger and better than you,  
And far more important in all that they do.

Families are sisters, who share all your things,  
Your bedroom, your records, your bracelets and rings.  
They use all your perfume and ladder your tights  
Then keep you awake playing music at night.

But God's family's a unit where we all belong  
He supports us in trouble when things have gone wrong.  
He shares in our gladness our sadness and fears.  
He loves us and cares for us through all of the years.

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**October Calendar:**

**Sunday 31<sup>st</sup>** European Summer Time ends:

**Clocks go back one hour.**

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