**Minister’s Letter for February 2020 newsletter**

Dear friends,

A dictionary definition of a habit is: ‘a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up.’ Of course, there are some habits which are good for us and other habits which can adversely affect our lives. In the third chapter of his letter to the Colossians, Paul describes the change which is to take place in a person’s life when they become a disciple of Jesus. He uses the illustration of taking off old clothes, belonging to the old way of life, and putting on new clothes which are appropriate for the life of following Jesus. Perhaps we could say that this is akin to breaking old negative habits, and creating new positive habits. Paul writes, *‘as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience’* (Colossians 3.12). As followers of Jesus, as the Holy Spirit continues his work within us, character traits like those highlighted by Paul should become more evident in our daily lives.

John Wesley talked about five ‘means of grace’ which, when they become positive habits in our lives, can help us to grow in the things of God. The five aspects which Wesley highlighted are: 1. Prayer; 2. Searching Scripture; 3. Receiving the Lord’s Supper; 4. Fasting (abstinence); 5. Fellowship with other believers. Wesley’s contention was that when each of these elements become regular habits in our lives, they help us develop as disciples and grow in our relationship with God and with one another. This in turn will help us to become more effective and fruitful in our lives of discipleship. In other words, we should be seeking to develop these five aspects of the life of a disciple as positive habits in our lives. Now might be a good time to take stock and consider how we are doing in each of the five areas.

Unless we are seeking to grow and develop as disciples of Jesus, both individually and collectively, then we are neglecting something vital! One of the ways in which we grow as disciples of Jesus is to develop healthy spiritual habits, including those highlighted by Wesley. On the other hand, we also need to consider whether there are some aspects of our lives which have become habits which are adversely affecting our spiritual growth. With God’s help, they need to be dealt with. Let’s all seek to make the year 2020 one in which we work on creating healthy habits and ditching unhealthy ones.

With love,

Steve