**“A time to mourn and a time to dance”** (Ecclesiastes 3.4b)

8 weeks since I last led a service in this room; 7 since Nicol’s service on 15 August. Long time?! Much worse for some around the world, including Auckland. Now we can gather, even if strangely. TEXT.

Two words for time in Greek – kronos, and kairos. The former marks the passage of moments, the latter is more about the use of time: time for bed, time to eat, time to move on, etc. TEXT is about kairos, and different ways in which we use the passing of moments. Now it is Spring it is the kairos for veggie planting.

Sometimes kairos moments are imposed – bereavement, Christmas; sometimes we choose – when to get married, decluttering our garage. For us all Lockdown has been a time away from each other imposed upon us by our government, to protect us from something much worse (Covid-19 Delta). But how have we used that time? Have we been wallowing in misery, phoning and Zooming at every chance, or has it been a time of relief from daily stress, and an opportunity for rest? Or what?

For most, whether seen positively or negatively, it has been like a kind of exile.

Jews knew Exile after the fall of Judah. Read parts of Psalm 137 & Psalm 126. TEXT - each kairos offers something, neither is better than the other. It is about using each kairos the best.

Ps 137: ***In our front rooms we sat down; there we wept when we remembered Lindisfarne. On the backs of our chairs we hung up our Sunday best. How can we sing hymns away from Lindisfarne?***

Ps 126: ***Now the Lord has brought us back to Lindisfarne, it is like a dream! How we laugh, how we sing for joy!***

So, of course, we rejoice when we return to Lindisfarne. Exile seems a bad experience only to be forgotten. But is it? TEXT. Bereavement is not a bad experience to be forgotten - there is a right time to mourn.

Being in ‘Exile’ gave us a chance to work out what we value most, what we miss most, what we need most to protect about being God’s people together. But by the same token it also told us what is not as important as we thought. As a parish from time to time it is right to reassess the value of various groups and activities. Maybe some, previously valued, are no longer as valuable. Maybe other activities, so far not occurring, will seem to be ones we wish to develop and grow.

Jews learnt lessons from Exile: where God could be worshipped was changed – everywhere; how God was worshipped was changed - the Temple became less valuable, the Torah more so.

TEXT. I pray that in our time of dancing, now we have returned from exile, we hold on to the lessons learnt and stay attuned to the Spirit who guides us to use our time well and maybe change our dance.