

Religion in a time of pestilence

21 short prescriptions during the Covid-19 pandemic



Part 2

The fun police won't let you buy alcohol at present. I see our hand sanitiser is 70% alcohol – but the wrong kind, alas, if we run short.

I thought it might be useful recording some of the reasons we at St Andrew's, Mondeor/Suideroord, go to church.

An analogy I find makes sense, is a financial one. People invest money in order to receive a return on their investment. There are those in our midst who make a good living as investment advisors. The bad ones don't survive, the really good ones, make a very good living.

People come to church voluntarily. They give the church money – usually not a lot, but in some cases, quite substantial amounts. We all know that when you die, you can't take your investment portfolio with you. Someone who didn't save or invest, will inherit it from you. Lucky dog.

If you didn't think God was worth a portion of your income, you wouldn't put any money in the plate. A parish church needs cash in order to survive. At present, enough people think St Andrew's is worth investing in. We are a going concern. The dividends are, naturally, out of this world.

But can one quantify spiritual things in a financial sense? Those people who meet under a tree in the open veld Sunday after Sunday, must be getting the same sense of satisfaction as we do? If not, they will go and find another tree somewhere else.

What exactly does St Andrew's offer that brings people back for more of the same each week?

A sense of community and belonging? To a certain extent. You can get all that and beer at the local bowling club.

A religious service? There are other churches nearby doing the same, more or less.

We are something of a boutique church: traditional - but without being obsessive about it. We appeal to black and white, young and old. We seem to share a common identity. The answer is Jesus.

The moment a church crafts its persona to attract feet or maintain a cultural tradition, it becomes a sect. Unless the central focus is the person and work of Jesus, we will end up as a holy huddle, obsessed with self.

My prayer is that Jesus – risen, ascended, glorified - may continue to be why we put money in the collection plate and sacrifice a lie-in on Sunday mornings to meet for common worship.