

## Tyndale Thought for the Day

10th July 2020

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The closure of churches for worship and their reopening, initially only for private prayer, has created some strange alliances. Whilst those in the Catholic tradition welcomed individual access to sacred space, Protestants and Moslems were much more wary of the opening of places of worship for private prayer without the possibility of congregational engagement.

Part of the difference for us in the Free-church tradition is that we regard “church” as too big a word to be confined to a building. “Church” is people, the redeemed people of God, not bricks and mortar. Then again to talk of a church as sacred space seems to belittle the sacredness of ordinary space where the Spirit is ever at work. Not without wisdom has evangelicalism been called “the religion of the home”, where prayer is made within the natural confines of the family which in healthy relationships mirrors the path of discipleship.

Closed churches have led once again to the celebration of what have been called “kitchen eucharists” which would have been the norm for our forefathers during years of persecution and are still consolation and nurture for our persecuted brethren in the world today. The question is raised whether in days of on-line liturgy a communion service can be valid when the bread and wine have not been consecrated by priestly hands – we would answer positively with a long tradition of lay presidency, with greater stress on the action than the substance – *broken* bread and wine *poured out* (Matt. 26:26–28), the latter no longer regrettably part of our normal practice, but both bespeaking the sacrifice of our Crucified Saviour, a body broken and a life shed, but brought to the disciples’ attention by the risen Christ at supper at Emmaus.

*John Briggs*