

# 40 Days of Fitness

A daily devotional by Rev Garry Hardingham

## DAY 1 – FIT FOR PURPOSE?

What does it mean to be ‘Fit for purpose’?

As I write this, I am two weeks away from a double total knee replacement. As you read this, I will be in Cairns Private hospital hoping that the decision I’ve made is a good one. In November 2019, I split a meniscus while out on my usual walk up Hallorans Hill in Atherton. From that day, I have been basically unable to walk and real distance. Soon after, my right meniscus also went on me and then the specialist gave me the bad news that I also had advanced arthritis in both knees. Three and bit years later, the inflammation in both knees has not been fully able to be contained and has accelerated the cartilage decay in my knees and, well, here I am.

The thing is is that after November 2019, my knees have no longer been ‘fit for purpose’. They were there (I felt them every single hour!!). But they weren’t able to the job I needed for them to do. As a result, I stopped all exercise, gained weight (which made matters worse) and slowly my life was coming to a grinding halt.

A few weeks back, I spoke to a lady whose knees went years ago. But she refuses to get knee replacements because of the fear of the operation and recovery. It’s no secret that knee replacements are extremely painful!! But, despite the fact that she has to roll around the house on a wheelie chair, has to use a wheelchair in public, and is in constant pain, she refuses to undergo what is regarded as a life-changing operation.

In the confidence of calling these days, “post-Covid19” and recognising that people are still getting ill and dying, it is interesting to see how we, as a church, have come out of the past three years. From the first lockdown in early 2020 and through the torturous restrictions in worship and movement, the church has faced some real challenges. Not least financially. As well as sacramentally and relationally. Sometimes we took on some dodgy practices for good healthy reasons, that some congregations continue with unaware of why they are dodgy because we lost the understanding or what the church truly is. Or maybe we never really knew in the first place.

We lost some of our fitness. Maybe we too need a life-changing operation. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves.

In this series of daily devotions and studies leading up to our Presbytery meeting in May, I want to explore with you what it means to be ‘fit for purpose.’ It will be a meandering journey about the nature of God, the church, mission and purpose. We will deal with some tough stuff and even spend some time looking deeply at the theology of the church, its ecclesiology. But it is important to understand who we are as a church in order to ask the fundamental questions, “Are we fit for purpose?” “Is ‘purpose’ really our purpose?” and if not, “What are we meant to be fit for?”

Every day (when I am home that is), I look out from my verandah and see Mount Baldy which looms over the town of Atherton. In my salad days I could bound up Mount Baldy during a lunch break and still have energy aplenty. But now....just the thought makes me depressed. I’m even at the point that just thinking those bright young things bounding up its slippery slopes doesn’t even bring back memories of my triumphs, but deepens my hurt and feelings of inadequacy.

If you are like me or if this is your spiritual life, or the life of your congregation, then let’s get this surgery done! I’m only 58. I’m not dead yet. And neither is our church. The surgery may be painful at times, but, trust me, it will be worth it. Its time to get fit!!

### PRAYER

God,  
This day. Every day, All day  
Make me long for you  
Let me thirst for your presence.  
Bring healing and wholeness  
That I might be fit for whatever you call me to.  
Let me suffer the tempering fire of your refining presence  
And restore me and my church to life anew in You. Amen