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Dear friends,

I wonder if you watched the last series of Celebrity Big Brother this year? I was surprised just how many people said to me that they had become addicted to it. The series was called 'Hell is other people' and clearly the idea was to choose a set of contestants whose opinions and actions would lead to confrontation and 'entertainment'. Well the producers did not get the series they expected. With the exception of a small amount of petulant infantile behaviour in the two weeks from a contestant quickly removed by the viewing public, we had housemates who came to appreciate each other. Not hell at all. Stephen Baldwin, former Hollywood bad boy and now Born Again Christian was given a Bible. This was supposed to wind up everyone. Instead they suggested daily Bible readings and Stephen gave rather long-winded explanation. He even led Alex Reid, the eventual winner to make a personal commitment to Jesus. On the final show, when Alex had amazed himself by winning, he was interviewed by Davina. Live, in front of an audience and five million people, she asked Alex about this time with Stephen. Alex spoke positively and then said, "I want to take this further and learn more about Jesus, the man who shaped history". Next day, if you looked at the newspaper and news websites reports on the series and the final, you would have found nothing about this positive Christian content. It was as if it was embarrassing and unmentionable. Instead they focussed on the fact that Vinnie Jones had not won the show and Alex relation with his girl friend and soon to be wife Jordan. What was meant to be Hell had given a little taste of Heaven, not what was intended at all and certainly not to be mentioned in the rest of the media.

As I write I am delighted that we have two people who have already committed to undertake some study towards confirmation in September. These good people want to learn more about Jesus, what it means to live a Christian life, be part

of a church family and have a growing and dynamic relationship with God. I hope others who worship with us will also want to explore the possibility of confirmation this year. If you would like an informal chat about the possibility, please talk to Sue or myself as soon as possible.

During the season of Lent, as we spiritually prepare for the celebration of all that Easter brings, we look to learn more about Jesus. This year we have a course that has been prepared for the Churches Together by Peter Hunt, from the United Reformed Church. I am sure that the five Tuesday evenings will be a rewarding time for getting to grips with Bible readings that will challenge us and inspire us. Every Lent we get impressive numbers at the evenings, yet often they are the same people each year. During the winter one of the people who attended in the last two years, who has a child at the Church School said to me, "Remind me when the Lent groups start Patrick. I can't wait, I really love them". I am convinced that lots of people would find the discussions stimulating. I worry just as much about people who consider themselves Christians but do not see the need to grow in their faith as I do about those who have no interest in faith at all. Recently the Diocese ran a vocations day with the title *Moving on – standing still is not an option*. This challenging statement could equally apply to our Christian faith and understanding. None of us can afford to be complacent in the face of the daily challenges of the life and the negative attitude of the world to faith. Lent is a time for grasping this reality and looking to do something about it. The Lent course and the booklet of daily Bible readings and reflections are a good way to begin this process. But first we need to accept the challenge ourselves and accept the need to grow in understanding and faith.

Celebrity Big Brother and other so-called reality television have been a feature of the last decade, a time when we have seen the growth of a militant and vocal atheism. How ironic that the final series of C.B.B. had significant religious content. Yet no one should be surprised that this was conveniently ignored by the wider media. To show an interest in religious faith is counter to our modern culture. Are you brave enough?

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*.