

Reflection for 19th January

Acceptance

Unity

Thanksgiving

Acceptance has been the hardest grace for many of us to receive during lockdowns last year and now 2021 too. So let us begin today by reflecting on St. Paul's words in Philippians 4 v. 11-15 (RSV)

I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

And in truth even in tier 4 lockdown with all of us self-isolating, unless in essential work, we do abound. We have comfortable homes, adequate clothing, ways of communicating with the outside world via telephone, internet and TV. Last Sunday we shared silent worship by reading the beautiful service written and sent to us, and knew that however isolated physically we might be we are not alone. And we are well provided for here in Watton. Even the diocese has described us as a beacon of hope in the heart of Breckland. Back to St. Paul: he wrote those words in that letter to the church in Philippi while under house arrest in Rome, awaiting a trial that could well have led to his execution. That did come later after a second imprisonment in Rome.

Unity We are now in the annual week of prayer for Christian unity. Strangely, it may seem to us, the pandemic has increased our unity as we face together the same devastating disease. We are working together here, our churches in Watton. But this is happening all over the world, not least where the churches are most severely persecuted. Many more people in this country have become involved in this caring work carried out in the name of Christ. Some are working to the point of physical and mental exhaustion to help us all through this crisis. And we all, churches together in mission, owe it to them to uphold them constantly in prayer, and support them practically when we can. Much is said about the NHS staff and little good about the teachers. I know someone who is a special needs assistant in a primary church school north of here: a school kept open for vulnerable children and the children of essential workers. It is a very cold job as they must work with all windows open and doors open too. Two essential groups of workers; one sweating in full PPE and one freezing in whatever thermal clothing they possess! In unity let us pray for them all.

Thanksgiving

I could write a book if I listed all that we have to be thankful for in our lockdown situation!

As you reflect today make your own list. Here are just a few pointers:-

Some of us have actually seen more of our families by way of visits from those who are local and form our support bubble; and on the internet those who live at a distance.

We have received unstinting support from our ministry team and many other church members have become involved in the caring work of the church.

We have had time to read, practice a musical instrument, enjoy crafts of various kinds which were often crowded out in the business of our so called normal modern world.

Some of us have been learning new languages.

Some have had more time in their gardens; others grown their own for the first time.

All have had time to enjoy the outdoor world. Even those of us with limited mobility have had time to look and listen.

Just a few from my own list. Now, make your own list and give thanks.

Praise and thanksgiving,
Father, we offer,
For all things living
Thou madest good;
Harvest of sown fields,
Fruits of the orchard,
Hay from the mown fields,
Blossom and wood.

Then will thy blessing
Reach every people;
All men confessing
Thy gracious hand,
Where thy will reigneth
No man will hunger;
Thy will sustaineth;
Fruitful the land.

(Albert F. Bayly,

born 1901)

Bless thou the labour
We bring to serve thee,
That with our neighbour
We may be fed.
Sowing or tilling,
We would work with thee,
Harvesting, milling,
For daily bread.

Father, providing
Food for thy children,
Thy wisdom guiding
Teaches us share
One with another.
So that rejoicing
With us, our brother
May know thy care.