

Focus!



One of the annoying aspects of encroaching '3rd Age' has been the inability of my eyes (and possibly my brain!) to stay focused for a prolonged period. Threading my sewing machine needle is a source of constant frustration, as is looking forward to reading a book at the end of the day, only to find the print dancing uncontrollably on the page! Strangely, as I write my husband enters bemoaning the fact that he'll have to get a magnifying glass to see what he is soldering!

Looking at an 'out of focus' photo can be irritating, as the eye strains to make out more detail, particularly when trying to identify the location of a landscape. We tend to think of landscapes as geographical constants – it's not often a mountain moves! – but, physical features aside, they do vary from year to year, season to season even. If I compare my garden with how it looked when we first moved here, the difference is enormous – trees removed, saplings now fully grown trees, a preponderance of sheds, vehicles – well, we won't go there!

A good example of a landscape on the move is the shifting sands in a desert. These past few months have been, for most of us, rather akin to trying to make headway over a sand dune in a force 10 gale! For many public sector workers (and probably a few private sector ones too) this kind of 'landscape' is all too familiar – the constant 'shifting of the goalposts' syndrome to mix my metaphors. Familiarity doesn't mean it makes it any easier to cope with though. These 'shifting sands' times are unprecedented, at least for 'Baby Boomers' and the generations beyond.

Planning for a physical return to our beloved church has been the catalyst, or opportunity, to look at how we do things in the light of how we should do things

in a different landscape. How has it changed? Fairly obvious. Do we need to re-adjust our lens in the light of how the pandemic has affected things – for us as individuals and society in general?

I was interested in how the author Lyndall Bywater perceives the unusual times we are living through:

“God has been helping me to understand something important about this lockdown season. Our world is changing. In truth it’s always changing, but this Coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the change so that we can see it more clearly. God is doing a new thing, but it’s only just ‘springing up’, to quote Isaiah 43:18. Back in March, I thought lockdown was the ‘new thing’, and I thought my job was to make it count in every way I possibly could, but now I understand that the lockdown was just a special season given to us by God to help us prepare for new things. That season has been wonderful for some and agonizing for others, but God has been using it to help us ready ourselves for what lies ahead”.

“Faith in the Making”

Do you agree with her assessment?

What lies ahead is a changing landscape. Most agree that the ‘new normal’ will not look like, or feel like, the ‘old normal’.

Our son has worked in the aviation industry since he was apprenticed aged 16. He waits to see if he will retain his job. It seems likely we won’t have the easy access to jetting round the world that we have previously considered our ‘right’. A cause for mourning or an opportunity to assess the harm we are doing to the environment and to realign ourselves to living in a more sustainable way?

Now is the time to refocus and sharpen up the image of the landscape we currently find ourselves in as we tentatively return to the church building. As I write post-Church Open Morning, 21 people have passed through it’s doors. We acknowledge that God’s Church is primarily it’s people, but we value the sanctuary. We also value seeing and meeting each other ‘in the flesh’. As Rev Andy Bryant puts it:

"I know online has been important through these strange months. It has helped keep connections and made new connections, but, forgive me, I will always value real physical encounter over virtual connection".

Do I Have To Go Back To Church? 13.7.20.

He goes on to say that as the Triune God is about relationship, Christians, as members of the Body of Christ, are interconnected, ie in relationship with one another. He says,

"I cannot be a Christian in isolation. Christian faith is borne out of relationship".

So, together we go forward, in the best way we can, taking the opportunity to re-focus on the Kingdom landscape as it appears in a post-covid world, valuing the 'old', embracing the new vistas that have opened up, but all the while treading cautiously, ensuring that we listen and follow as God guides us in the detail.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, we labour in vain". Ps 127:1