

## **February 2024**

### **Returning to Places**

Recently I have found myself returning to places I used to live and work in. I have met old friends, former work colleagues and acquaintances. It is somewhat strange as the buildings appear just the same though clearly with new staff and new layouts things have changed. I remember one member of staff from Ealing library once said to me that he always felt ‘depressed’ when people who used to work at the library returned to visit, as their lives always seemed to have moved on, while he was still doing the same job in the same place. He was actually making quite a joke of it but there was just an element of seriousness too.



I wonder, how many of us have, on occasion, felt similarly? I know that I have. Sometimes, it is possible to see everyone else’s life moving on very smoothly it seems (on the surface anyway), but ours feels like it is stuck, we are going through the same routines, day after day, week after week and even year after year.

Of course, in reality no two days are the same, it may feel that they are but they are not. For with each day, or even each hour or minute there is the opportunity of change, or an unique experience. I’m not necessarily talking about big life changes like moving house, or changing jobs, but the ‘little’ experiences that we probably wouldn’t take much notice of, such as watching a cat stalk a bird in the garden, or hearing a baby utter his first word, or receiving a letter in the post, with some news about friends or family, or even simply having a conversation with someone – for no two conversations are ever identical.

Each day, each hour, is an opportunity for growth. Our experiences are broad, whether or not we are doing a repetitive task, for our minds, our spiritual awareness is not clamped in irons.

That is why people such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Terry Waite, both of whom have, in their time, been incarcerated in prison, for no real crime, have used their experiences to speak of faith in God. Prison, a place where one day's routine is almost certainly, very similar to another – yet even there, life moves on, there are experiences to be gained.

So, perhaps next time when we are feeling that the world is moving on without us, or that we are stuck in the mud, doing the same thing day after day, let us try to remember that wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we are free to experience God's presence in our lives. We can never truly know what each day will bring, whose life we may influence, or what new experience we may gain. But, as Christians, we are assured of God's presence in life and in death.

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4).

Some consultants, who treat patients with a terminal illness, say that they have seen people only start living when they know they are dying. Facing death, whether imminent in our own life or in the life of someone we know, often leads us to ask serious questions about the value of life.

All life is God-given. Whether we spend our lives in one place doing one job, or move around and change our career path from time to time, doesn't really matter, so long as we are answering God's call on our life. God calls each of us, we simply need to listen, and follow where he leads.

*Rev Susan*

### **Colours, Readings and Saints Days**

Following our successful session on 'welcoming in church' last autumn We are holding another teaching session, this time on Liturgy, on Tuesday 6th February at 7.30pm in the Brass Crosby Room. Rev Michael will be leading and he hopes to make it fun with some interaction and an opportunity to test your current knowledge as well as giving the opportunity for questions at the end.