

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October**

Dear Friends

I must admit to have been feeling pretty gloomy of late. I dislike the darker mornings and evenings and find myself wanting to hunker down earlier and earlier in the day. A warm fire and Strictly Come Dancing lift the spirit.

These autumnal feelings are all the stronger this year – for obvious reasons. This is going to be a long winter. The relentless COVID19 storylines combined with the imminent election in the United States makes for an unappetising diet of news.

One way to get through these difficult times is to notice and rejoice in the little positives that are all around us. I'm very fortunate to be able to get out walking the dogs, and almost every day we have the delight of watching a grey heron on the canal by the wharf at Tutnall. A gracious and majestic sight.

Then this morning I took a harvest assembly online at Lickey End First School. I've never done this before *online* and despite all the nerves that accompany experiments, I really enjoyed it and it was wonderful to see the different classes through 'zoom' windows.

Having always had a love of politics (I once had a research pass to the House of Commons), the new Hugh Laurie TV mini series *Roadkill* is going to be making Sunday nights really special for a few weeks.

Finally, this afternoon, Liz and I made some green tomato chutney – delicious!

In other words, it's not difficult to find little ways of brightening our days if we look for them with open hearts and minds. As the psalmist says (Ps103): *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

Continuing with a biblical theme for a moment, I wonder if you have overlooked the greatness that lies within the books of the Apocrypha? These sacred writings come from the centuries between the Old and New Testaments and contain some wonderful surprises. The following popped up in evening prayer tonight. It comes from the book of Ecclesiasticus also known as Sirach:

*Honour physicians for their services,  
for the Lord created them;  
for their gift of healing comes from the Most High,  
and they are rewarded by the king.  
The skill of physicians makes them distinguished,  
and in the presence of the great they are admired.  
The Lord created medicines out of the earth,  
and the sensible will not despise them.  
Was not water made sweet with a tree  
in order that its power might be known?  
And he gave skill to human beings  
that he might be glorified in his marvellous works.  
By them the physician heals and takes away pain;  
the pharmacist makes a mixture from them.  
God's works will never be finished;  
and from him health spreads over all the earth.*

We will need our health services even more than ever this winter. How wonderful that scripture calls us to celebrate the skills of medics!

This is what I love about scripture – it's full of surprises. If it's not part of your regular routine, drop in on scripture sometime and discover something new.

Shortly this evening the PCC's new *Governance and Compliance* sub-committee will meet online for the first time. I guess the very existence of this committee (the idea is mine, it's not something other parishes will probably have), is testament to the increasingly bureaucratic nature of church life – safeguarding, data protection, health and safety etc. All of these and other compliance topics are of crucial importance but they are big subjects and can easily sap the energy of PCCs.

So, I am very grateful to those who have stepped up to spend a little of their precious time and energy helping to ensure that these areas of church life are appropriately managed. It is especially wonderful that this committee is drawn from people across the parish, to work together for the parish. As the months pass our churches are drawing ever closer together – a sign of the Kingdom perhaps?

Go gently this week, and may you be aware of God's presence alongside you:

David Ford, Rector