

FROM THE MANSE

Dear Friends,

Many people, myself included, like to talk about the past. We talk about our early years, our childhood home, parents and siblings, holidays that we had – not so much to the exotic places people travel to today, but day trips to the coast or to visit grandparents.

As we look back and remember, there can rise within us a longing for days that seemed to be less demanding, when the pace of life was a bit slower and we were not confronted with the challenges that we face now that we are older.

To look back and remember is a most natural thing to do. We call to mind what is, in essence, our own story.

Psalm 42 gives us insight into the Psalmist's state of mind at a particular point in time. He is discouraged and disillusioned and confronted by the harsh reality that life can be, he thirsts for God as a deer pants for water. He is in a fragile state but then....then his mood changes. He calls to mind times past and he remembers how with other pilgrims he joined in the worship of God in the Temple, and in remembering he found relief and respite for his restless and troubled soul. These things I remember.....

I am sure that during the pandemic many of us have called to mind times past.....when words like coronavirus and lockdown and face covering were not part of our vocabulary, when we could mix freely in large gatherings without concern for our well-being or that of others, when we could make plans without restrictions being suddenly imposed and forcing us to make changes.

Life is challenging – perhaps it always has been but the pandemic has certainly heightened the challenge and for that reason we look back and remember and in remembering, perhaps we also find relief and respite but then, we are confronted with reality again.

That was the Psalmist's experience. The relief and respite was only temporary but it was enough to sustain him, and to enable him to persevere and to put his hope in God. Looking back...As I write this, I call to mind the large congregation that gathered in our building, the times when we met together to worship God, occasions when in sorrow we shed our tears and in joy we laughed aloud. I have often thought of such times over these last six months, and have been comforted and strengthened by them, but now perhaps the time has come, yes to still look back and remember, but also to look forward.

Next Sunday services will resume in the Church building. They will be different from what we have known and the lack of singing will take a bit of getting used to as will the reduced number who are permitted to attend. But, and I've been telling myself this, we have to embrace it as a positive step – the first of many steps that will, I hope, lead to the day when many more will be able to gather in our sacred place, when we will sing again and enjoy the fellowship which we have missed so much. And my hope is steadfast, for like the Psalmist, it is in God who has never failed us and never shall.

Every blessing,

Your Friend and Minister,

Gary J McIntyre