



St Mark's Church, Reigate

July 2021

Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton

Dear Friends,

First of all a very big thank you for the part you've all played in supporting others and ensuring that your family, friends, neighbours and fellow parishioners have been able to flourish in some ways during the lockdown.

As we gradually step out of lockdown, it is not as plain sailing as a tortoise emerging from its annual hibernation ritual, especially when we take into account the hovering threat of the spread of a rather virulent variant of the Covid-19 virus. It is possible that this may have caused some of us to question the loving purposes of God or even the sovereignty of God. 'Why would a loving God allow so much suffering'; 'if God is as loving as we are led to believe, then he would do something to minimise the anguish'. It is quite understandable to question things - and God during challenging times, even when we know that such challenges are transitory. I suppose it is part of what it is to be human.

I am quite encouraged by the narrative of the life of Daniel in the Bible. Of course, his colleagues were also exemplary. To me they were so grounded and confident in their relationship with God that they simply got on with living. Reading their story exudes confidence in a matter-of-fact way and makes me believe that they knew what was really important and had sourced out where, in 'Brexit' speech, their red lines were. When they were taken into exile, they were happy to use the foreign names given to them but they drew the line when it came to certain foods and drink. And even then, Daniel was charm personified and negotiated with grace.

I wonder, as post-modern Christians, what our red lines are. We've all had to 'put up' with things in life but I wonder how obliging or gracious we were about it. I think it is always important to strike the right balance. We may not want to be accused of colluding, but we surely don't want to come across as intransigent, cold and unfeeling either. I suppose St Paul may have been trying to address this when he wrote about letting our gentleness be evident to all (Philippians 4.5). And he goes on to suggest the Christian antidote to being anxious (Philippians 4.6-7).

May the God of all encouragement and comfort continue to encourage us in our walk with him and others and strengthen us in his service.

With my best wishes