

Junior Church: Young Peoples' Group
Some Thoughts for the Week Beginning 28th June 2020

Hello Everyone,

We have reached another milestone in the journey through lockdown. Saturday marked the summer equinox and Tuesday was officially Mid-Summer's Day. As I sit at my desk and glance sideways out of the window I can hear the shouts of children and the sound of water as they plunge into their pool. I can hear the conversation of my neighbour and her friends social distancing in the garden. Then there is the screeching of the swifts as they wheel around the corner of the building at breakneck speed like a group of pilots in an aeronautical display. It certainly feels and sounds like high summer.

It is good to know, despite the pandemic, that the earth is still spinning and nature is performing its daily miracles. One of the nice things about working from home is to be distracted by the squabbling sparrows and to sit during lunch amongst the flowers. Recently I have been joined by a posse of Long Tailed Tits. It is fascinating to watch the interaction between them. They seem better mannered than the sparrows. I have enjoyed the daily wildlife diary by my friend Michael Blencowe (<https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/news/category/corona-wildlife-diary>) material in his small garden to keep his readers fascinated for all of that time.



Last week I mentioned the survey undertaken to establish what people valued most under lockdown. Nature came high on the list. It is endlessly fascinating and some of us have had more time and space recently to appreciate it. Getting it step with the rhythm of nature is very good for mental health, confronting the formless and desolate out of which God created the universe (Genesis 1:2). There is a beautiful rhythm to the telling of the creation story: 'Then God Commanded'...'God was pleased ...'Evening passed and morning came, that was the first day', repeated for each of the six days of creation. There is an order created out of the chaos. Someone said that every creative act begins with a mess.

And I love the way the annual Christian festivals march in parallel with the seasons: Christmas, in the depth of winter, celebrating the coming of Jesus, the light of the world, and Easter the season of growth, resurrection and rebirth. Ironically we are in what some churches call the season of Ordinary Time, the long period between Pentecost and Advent. Of course it doesn't feel very ordinary given current circumstances.

One of the pieces of advice that I have tried to follow during lockdown is to have an order or structure to the day and I think it has worked for me. It includes setting time to do a daily walk on Earlwood Common as spring has moved into summer, watching the natural order of spring turning to summer.

On the seventh day of creation God rested, to consider what he had done and to take pleasure in it. He blessed this day and has given it to us as a gift to remember Him and take joy in creation. It seems to me that by downgrading Sunday and making it a day like any other we have lost something of the rhythm and structure of the week when we can connect with God and celebrate His gifts.

I was interested to read a report of a speech by the Pope in which he said: 'Every crisis contains both danger and opportunity. Today I believe we have to slow down our rate of production and consumption and to learn to understand and contemplate the natural world. We need to reconnect with our real surroundings'

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-53107431/>)

During lockdown we have seen an increase in fly-tipping and, as lockdown eased and people flooded into the countryside, littering on an epic scale, farmers gates being left open and dogs attacking sheep. It seems to me that we can only really be in harmony with nature if we are in step with the One who created it.



In the last two or three weeks we have followed passages from Matthew which describe how Jesus prepared the disciples for the mission that lay before them. Today we talk about the 'Five Marks of Mission': to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; to teach, baptize and nurture new believers; to respond to human need by loving service; to challenge injustice and bring peace; and last, but by no means least, to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and unsustain and renew the life of the earth.

In this week's passage ([Matthew 10:40-42](#)) I find again that sense of order and rhythm. Jesus says that whoever accepts his followers accepts Him and whoever accepts Him accepts God. He talks about expressing a welcome in the form of a glass of water. To us that might seem a rather meager offering, but in the context of the politics and geography of the Middle East, both then and today, the offer of water is highly symbolic. The conflict between Arab and Israeli is as much about the control of water as of land, and denying water is about the exercise of power (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-1101797>). In creation terms, water of one of the fundamental elements of nature and essential to life.

When at last our church is open again can I suggest that, if you can, you make more time and walk to it. It is a great way to prepare your mind for what is to come. Be conscious of the rhythm of your movements. When you sit down, talk a moment to marvel afresh at the creative powers of the artist who produced our stained glass window and see if it says anything new to you post-lockdown. Take time also to



revisit the Quiet Room to contemplate the Creation Window, looking at it as if you have never seen it before.

Here is a short poem with which to end which I think captures something of the mystery and beauty of God's universe. It was written this week by Olivia, a member of my 'social bubble' and whose regular FaceTimes, Skypes and Zooms have been a welcome part of the rhythm of my life in lockdown.

Moon

Are you lonely, moon?
You big, bright, white balloon.
You have no water, wind or air
No wonder nothing lives up there!
No soil, no grass, all bare
And no atmosphere.
Glistening above us in the sky
Until it is finally time to say goodbye.

Olivia

Aged 11.

Have a great week, enjoy the beauty of the world around you and give thanks.

Rodney