

## Facebook Thoughts for the Day – November 2020

### 2<sup>nd</sup> November – Sarah Rodgers

Recently, we spent a week surrounded by water – not the seemingly constant rain we have been experiencing in the Eastern counties but the glorious rain-filled valleys of the Western Lake District. Blessed by days of sunshine and blue skies, wherever we walked, (and that has to be the purpose of a Lake District stay!) water was seldom out of view. It could be placid in a tarn, tumbling down a waterfall, rippling across a lake or coursing down a river. As a theme, water is symbolic for many faiths, representing cleansing, protection and healing. It is also one of the elements essential to life and a scarce and precious commodity in some parts of the world. Of all the biblical references that could have come to mind, one in particular seemed to resonate with these Covid times when we are trying to be kind and helpful wherever we can: “cast your bread upon the waters.” It is a lovely image of generosity, humanity and impartiality, carried out spontaneously and, like the ripples in the image, the effect can be far-reaching.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> November – Deacon Jen Woodfin

I was sorting through some old papers recently and I found a copy of the old poem ‘The Old violin’ by Myra Brooks Welch. I was given it by a friend who knew I played the violin. For various reasons I have been unable to play recently so this poem is particularly poignant. It tells of an old violin that was in an auction and nobody wanted to give much money for it. Then an old man picked it up and played so beautifully that people were willing to pay a lot of money for it. The crowd couldn’t understand it was explained that its value was changed in the master’s hand. The poem then relates the violin to our Christian life. The last few verses include these:

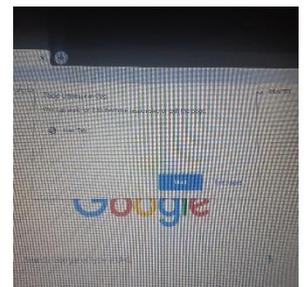


"And many a man with life out of tune  
All battered and bruised with hardship  
Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd  
Much like that old violin  
But the Master comes,  
And the foolish crowd never can quite understand,  
The worth of a soul and the change that is wrought  
By the Touch of the Masters' Hand.

Do read the complete version sometimes. It certainly speaks to me as I find that I often need the touch of the Masters' Hand.

### 4<sup>th</sup> November – Sam Parfitt

There are universal mysteries in this life that I am yet to understand - 'child-proof' medicine bottle tops, 'tear here' packets of sauce (that don't), why we can put a man on the moon, but the rain makes the telly go wrong and why when you're in a hurry does the computer refuse to compute ?! This morning the familiar 'page unresponsive' message flashed before my eyes and I was given two options - wait or exit. I pressed wait and the same message appeared, after repeating this a few times I pressed exit and the page was gone. In the midst of this I thought about how many times God must see the message 'person unresponsive' flash before his eyes and how wonderous it is that he will always press the wait button. I was exasperated after pressing wait only a few times, but God is not limited in this way, he will never press the exit button, even when we are testing, trying or unresponsive - Hallelujah!!



## 5<sup>th</sup> November – Rev Barbara Winner



Taking photographs is definitely not one of my strengths, but sometimes I take one which sums up something of what I was thinking and feeling when I took it. This one came from one of my walks on holiday recently. There was – and is – something about the combination of the power of light and water coming together. They are both life giving, and both necessary for life as we know it on this earth. But as I stood and listened I was reminded of all the babies and children I had baptised with life giving water and the giving of the baptismal candle. New life is everywhere! The rocks too are an important part of what was before me. I was reminded that the life of God is with us in all the rocky places too.

Open thou the crystal fountain,  
Whence the healing stream shall flow;  
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through:  
Strong deliverer,  
Be thou still my strength and shield. (*William Williams*)

## 7<sup>th</sup> November – Aileen Fox

**“Tall oaks from little acorns grow”** - a saying I have grown up with. I can remember two money boxes given to my twin cousins as a present with this on. One was blue the other red. I was 16 when the arrival of two cousins on my mum’s side of the family arrived. I could see the reasoning behind the saying. That hopefully they would grow up strong and the money saved in the money box would also grow and build up and be useful to them.



There were many oak trees in the spinney across from my home. I loved picking acorns up and there is something fascinating at the cup that it sits on and the way the acorns hang from the tree. Equally so the wavy leaf and the stout trunk and massive branches. Not forgetting the roots of course. Every so often I find a small oak tree growing in my garden. The work of the resident squirrel who apart from attacking the birdfeeders, buries nuts in the garden, though predominantly hazel.

Something as small as an acorn can produce such a massive tree. It is wonderful and something to remind us about ourselves.

So often we believe we cannot do something, we haven’t the courage, the skills, the opportunities. But God can use each one of us, whether its ‘doing’, or writing a letter, or sitting quietly and praying for others. Perhaps it is making cakes and serving them or just befriending someone. Whatever we are asked to do may be small and we can’t see the bigger picture. Yet all little efforts can make a difference. Moses told God that he couldn’t go to Pharaoh and ask him to release the Israelites. He said he had no ability to speak and reason, but God knew differently and Aaron his brother went with him and did the speaking. Sometimes we need to combine our efforts, but God knows us and is ready to assist and direct us if we only say yes and try.

Tall oaks from little acorns grow.

## 9<sup>th</sup> November – Rev Liz Jolly

As I walk up through the woods and the golden and yellow leaves are blowing past and settling to make a multi-coloured carpet, I realise that the trees have mastered recycling long before we thought of it.

Those magnificent beings that have stood for years and seem to be so permanent.

But – I have a hornbeam tree in my garden, at least 50 feet high and a trunk too big for me to hug, that is dying. It is dying, because, as I discovered a few days ago, there were toadstools a few feet from the bottom of the tree. Those toadstools are honey fungus, and so now I know why the tree is dying.

Honey fungus has an underground network of bootlaces (rhizomorphs) that get to the roots of a tree and kill the tree.

Amazing that something so big and strong is killed by an apparently insignificant toadstool!

A bit like Goliath being felled by a pebble – such a thing had never entered his head before!

In life, do not underestimate the small and insignificant, they can be very powerful. In people, do not underestimate the apparently insignificant, they have a powerful part to play, if only where they mark their cross.



## 10<sup>th</sup> November – Rev Jacqui Horton

Judging by empty aisles in Tesco, some people used the day or two before the new lockdown to stock up on loo rolls again, or flour or dog food. I used the time to drive around Central Norfolk taking photos of every town and village where we have an active Methodist Chapel (and one or two where we don't). I am going to need these photos for a further circuit prayer project in December but the task had an interesting side effect. Not only did I discover where places were that, up until now, have only been a name on the plan but I also got a sense of each place and a feel for how the Chapel building fitted into the community. Of course, it made me think that I should have done this before but, then, I am always juggling a whole list of things that I really ought to do (and some things always stay at the bottom of the list).

On completing Sam's pre-Advent task set yesterday, I discovered that one of the things that I was thankful for was living in Norfolk (this is our 11th year). My thought for today is a prayer: Thank you God for Norfolk – its towns and villages, its people, its countryside and its history.

## 12<sup>th</sup> November – Dee Moden

Listening to the Corona Virus update this evening (Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November), I was very impressed by the way Professor Van -Tam gave analogies explaining at what stage we were with the vaccine. He explained in simple terms using familiar things we could all identify with. Football, when deciding an end result penalties were taken, the first went in, but that didn't mean the match had been won only that the goalie wasn't invincible! The second analogy came later after another question, this time he asked us to picture waiting for a train then suddenly seeing the lights in the distance so we knew that it was approaching but it hadn't yet arrived and when it did arrive how many seats would be available.

I don't know, but I wondered if he is a Christian and had taken his lead from Jesus! Jesus knew how to speak to those who were listening, who maybe couldn't quite understand what he really meant. He told parables pertinent to the times they were living in and what the people knew –

fishing – farming – he spoke about vineyards and workers – families and children by way of explanation, bringing meaning and life to his word which is still relevant today. So today in this situation we must be patient listen to advice given and look at the bigger picture. Just the same, as we look to Jesus to help get us through this we realise, his hand is at work giving us hope that all will be well.



## 14<sup>th</sup> November – David Yarham

### “In Flanders fields the poppies blow between the crosses, row on row”.



Writing this on 11th November I'm reminded of how that first line of John McCrae's now famous poem has transformed our perception of poppies from being that of merely colourful weeds of farmland fields to that of being crimson symbols of bloody battlefields.

We all now accept that symbolism - but how, as individuals, do we respond to it? Do those red petals act only as reminders of the, bloodshed, suffering and cruelty of war - do they tempt us to despair as we know that, in so many parts of the world these horrors are still with us? Or do the flowers more boldly remind us of the courage,

comradeship and self-sacrifice of the soldiers who fought on those battlefields and were spurred on by the hope that in their current deprivations and sufferings they could help to overcome evil and to lay the foundations of a better future world.

Warfare reveals the depths to which humanity can fall. Paradoxically, it can also give us glimpses of the heights to which humans can rise.

If you still have them, look at your Armistice Day poppies and let them, in these troubled times, speak to you of both war and peace, of despair and hope, of the evil and the goodness of the world. Then look at them again - this time simply as reminders of the poppies you saw flowering in the sunlit fields of summer - each one an icon of the beauty which, despite humanity's conflicts and despoilings, still lies at the heart of creation.

Let us thank God for that beauty and let us pray that we may always be able to echo Louis Armstrong and “think to ourselves what a wonderful world”.

## 16<sup>th</sup> November – Rev Barbara Winner

This is one of the pictures I took on the North York Moors. It's not one of the best but it was taken on a glorious day. What an amazing the place this is. I hope to go back one day and do a lot more walking. One of the aspects of this particular photo which intrigued me when I looked at later, was the grey plastic object. It looked out of place – a blot on the landscape. At first I wondered if it was a way marker but looking closer maybe it's a bin holding salt or grit? I remember there was a sign close by warning people not to drive along this road in severe weather conditions.

I wonder how I would feel about this place in the depths of winter? I imagine it can be a really hard place to be and travel along. It can be a very different experience living and working in a place in all weathers from visiting on a sunny day. If this is a grit bin it could be a life saver.

In tough times sometimes it's the little things which can make a big difference on our journeys!



## 17<sup>th</sup> November – Deacon Jen Woodfin

“Oh dear, that’s not good.” I thought. I had tried to park very close into the side of the road, hoping to leave the car while we went for a walk. But, unfortunately, I got too close to the edge and the car slid gently into a very muddy ditch. It was leaning at an angle and clearly needed to be towed out. There then followed an interesting series of encounters. Two men appeared very quickly but were unable to attach the tow hook properly. The RAC was contacted and the wait began. Later someone from a local car rescue firm attached the tow hook correctly. In all about 27 people stopped to ask if we were alright and if they could help. “No, thank you, the RAC are coming” we replied. After over three hours of waiting a nice man with a tractor/digger offered help which we accepted and he gently towed us out and all was well. What a relief.



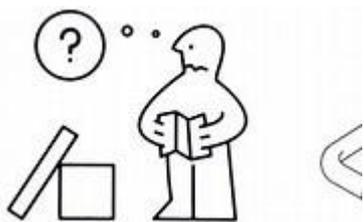
We were so appreciative of how many people stopped to offer help. They were people of all ages and capability and some played an important part in the outcome. The first man had tried to fit the tow hook. The car rescue man then fitted it properly. Finally, the tractor man used the tow hook and pulled us out of trouble. In between times people showed care and concern which helped our morale. Through the sequence of events it felt God had provided who we needed and when. We could see God’s love in action. When we offer a helping hand, perhaps to a stranger, we too can be part of showing God’s love to all.

## 18<sup>th</sup> November – Sam Parfitt

I love learning about nature, especially those wonderful oddities that scientists don’t have an explanation for! Recently I have been reading about glacial mice, which are actually pebbles which have accumulated moss around them. They are found in Alaska, Chile and Iceland and have been recorded moving around 2.5cm a day. They are often found in groups and Scientists have studied them and largely de-mystified them, although no-one can explain why glacial mice move in the same direction as one another in these groups! I find it quite inspiring that there are many mysteries in this world that we shall never know, I'm humbled every day to stand in awe at the wonder and breath of all of God's creation.



## 19<sup>th</sup> November – Rev Graham Pickhaver



**Wise Words** - I love the book of Proverbs which is part of the wisdom literature of the Bible. It’s more like a manual for daily living or book of instructions similar to a car manual or instruction sheet to build an Ikea cabinet. There’s even advice for safe shopping in the supermarket (20:23)! Of course, there’s the wonderful description of the noble wife (31:10-31) who has the full confidence of her husband to buy a field or decide on the best quality of wool and is very skilful in making clothes for her family and even a

duvet for her bed. In fact, she had a reputation around town for her enterprise, skilfulness and resourcefulness. Her husband was a city elder and always had a clean shirt on every day (31:23)! There’s also a lot of advice about what we say to each other including warnings about gossip and lying and the comfort and blessing of words that build us up and cement friendships.

The heart of Proverbs, which were mainly written by Solomon, is not just good advice but really a firm expression of our fear of the Lord and trust in Him. Apart from acknowledging the greatness, majesty and wonder of God, to fear God is to have such a fear of Him that we do not want to step outside of His will and purpose for us. Now we know that in scripture there are plenty of fear nots, in fact the Christmas story itself has quite a few! We also know that if we have trusted Christ as our personal Saviour we have no fear of

future judgment since the judgment of our sins took place at the cross. That's always a humbling and wonderful thought!

So, we are encouraged throughout the book of Proverbs to fear the Lord since to do that is to have both knowledge (1:7) and wisdom or understanding (9:10). True knowledge of course here is to know God – that is the whole purpose of the gospel and wisdom is about knowing how to live lives that glorify and please Him.

What a blessing is ours that today through Christ we can know God, can walk with Him and with His help have wisdom to cope with all the demands of our lives. All scripture points to Jesus and Proverbs leads us to the story of the two builders that Jesus spoke about (Matthew 7:24-27). One was wise, the other foolish! What was the difference? One listened and lived out the words of Jesus, the other ignored them. Let's always be the wise one!

### **21<sup>st</sup> November - Aileen Fox**

As many people know I love my garden, it is quite big and will never be manicured but mature with unexpected surprises. Over the 29 years I have lived here the garden has gone through many changes as I try and tame ivy, weeds and self sets. I am blessed with an abundance of birds who wage an ongoing battle each year, can I prune the creeper back so I can see through the windows or will they (blackbird) build their nest first. A lot depends on the weather in February as to who wins! But I wouldn't have my garden so neat and tidy it wouldn't be me as an untidy person. However, the reason for my garden philosophy is I love what I find, the birds, the squirrel, even up to a point the Muntjac deer. I like the frogs and toads now I have stopped being scared of them jumping out.

There have always been mushrooms or fungi in my rear garden, parts are quite damp. But the most exciting find has been this group of fungi in the picture. I had a beautiful cherry tree in my front garden but for the last few years it has been declining. I gave it one more year, but it was dead and all it had left was its shape. I realised it had to go and the tree people removed it a few weeks ago. After it had gone, and the logs stacked up, we had a lot of rain. On my way out to Church I was greeted by this amazing display of fungi. Two days before no sign of them. I think they are beautiful their shape and size stunning. A garden feature, but nature's, not mine. From the dead tree stump and the area cleared and disturbed, has come new life. A reminder for us all as we struggle to keep going during the pandemic, try to reopen our Churches, or make decisions for the future. Even when things seem finished or dead there are new things springing up. The disciples could not get their heads around Jesus' death but when they realised finally after the resurrection, their lives had a new meaning and for them a new way of doing things. As we reflect and hope, may we be ready to embrace new ways of working and being followers of Jesus.



### **23<sup>rd</sup> November – Judith Semmons**



The other weekend Ian and I were working in the garden, busily pruning back flowers and shrubs. I was trimming the bush of these purple flowers, dropping them onto the floor ready to go into the garden waste. Then it occurred to me that they still had a lot of life left in them: why throw them away? So they adorned our kitchen table, with a cascade of beauty for nearly two weeks; beauty that was going to be thrown away - rejected yet offering so much once given the opportunity.

In Luke 22 v 54 -62 we can read of Peter's denial at Jesus' crucifixion: too afraid to admit that he knew Jesus; fearing the consequences. And when Peter realised that he had failed, he wept bitterly; no doubt feeling rejected. Yet Peter went on to be a great witness, ambassador and disciple for Jesus. We too may feel rejected at times; that we fail God but he guides us with the power of his Holy Spirit to do great things when given the opportunity.

## 24<sup>th</sup> November - Rev Jacqui Horton

The activity on Sunday (pre-Advent Advent Calendar) was to observe 3 things outside and then to observe them again – what did we notice the second time? Early in the morning I looked out into our garden and observed the two sycamore trees that overlook us (on higher ground) from the neighbouring garden at the back. The one on the left was devoid of leaves, the one on the right still had a smattering of yellow leaves on all its branches. Fascinating! The small difference in position means that the trees react to the seasons at a different rate. Then I looked again. This time I saw a solitary yellow leaf clinging to the left hand tree that I hadn't noticed before. How could I have missed it? We often go through life failing to notice a whole variety of things and it is worth it, occasionally, to stop and look, listen, taste and smell more mindfully. We are then in an even better position to praise God for all aspects of creation!

## 25<sup>th</sup> November – Sam Parfitt



The calendar reminds me that this time next week we will be in December, Wendy will be opening her advent calendar and starting her breakfast with the little chocolate and the Christmas tree might very well make its way down from the spare room. But I know it will be in good company, as I have taken to going for my daily walk during the evenings and have noticed since mid-November an ever-growing number of Christmas trees, candy canes, Father Christmases and shooting stars shining out from people's homes. As Christians preparing for the penitent season of Advent, we may well scoff, tut or shake our heads at this sight and question the hurriedness of people. I was in a shop last Saturday and the lady behind the till said 'I know it's too early really, but I think I might put my tree up tomorrow'. Having given this subject some thought already, my answer was this 'Well, Jesus came to bring light into our darkness and I think we've all experienced darkness this year in one way or another, so if putting up your tree and lights brings you even a little bit of happiness, I think you should go for it!' I hope that she did put her tree up and enjoyed the roast dinner she talked about having, and that the twinkly lights on her tree serve as a reminder that there will always be a light in our darkness and we don't always have to wait for the 'right' time to look for its shine.

## 26<sup>th</sup> November – Rev Rosemary Wakelin

It was so muddy that I thought I would take Siegfried on a drier walk (his legs are so short his tummy gets filthy) so we went down memory lane to Sheringham and walked the length of the front. In our missionary years we spent our furloughs in Sheringham and the children enjoyed many happy hours on the beach. It made me think of the story of the two old ladies sitting on the front, one says "That's windy" the other replies "No, that's Thursday" to which the first responds "So am I, let's have a cup of tea." We hear what we want to hear, or maybe what we think we hear. Siegfried has what I think is called "selective deafness". He fails to hear me when I tell him to stop digging up the carpet, but never misses the slight noise made if I touch his treat box. Dogs have so many human characteristics. Maybe it's a bit like that with our faith. We hear the comfortable bits but block the uncomfortable ones. It was the same in Jesus's day. The religious people had got it all worked out and neatly buttoned up, what could go wrong? but along comes Jesus and starts blowing all the constricting buttons off. Judaism is a wonderful religion, we have inherited much of it, but the original loving relationship which began it had got buried in a sea of risk-free rules and rituals. Love is risky, it exposes you to getting hurt. Jesus knew that, but took the risk because he knew that love is the only thing that can make us real enough to cope with the eternal LOVE for which we are intended. There are plenty of people who prefer to play it safe and disapprove of risk-takers. I remember my friend Rev'd Colin Morris saying, "There are two sorts of Christian, the pure and the responsible". He knew that from painful experience as he opposed the Apartheid system.



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## 27<sup>th</sup> November – Aileen Fox



I have always enjoyed taking photos, but there have been times when I couldn't be bothered to take all the camera equipment and it's been easier to slip a compact camera into my pocket or use my phone. Photos have a power to remind us of events some spectacular, some memorable and some when we look back remind us of people no longer with us. But photos have another aspect to reproduce a scene that is unique. Taking my exercise in Blakeney recently I decided to take my larger digital camera with me. Therefore I had a rucksack, also my compact camera and the essentials we need to carry with us these days like mask, tissues, hand sanitizer and cash

or bank card. It was still a little early so I had to be patient. People passed by and spoke and I waited trying out different lenses, different angles and yes I did get some beautiful shots of the quay. One older resident chatted to me as she sat on a bench nearby, we looked and admired all the colours before us. Then she set off home with her dog, saying how nice to have had a chat. Finally it was time to walk back to the car, but I was reluctant to leave I had enjoyed the company and the scenery. But there was another surprise as I drove inland, the sky was red and so beautiful. Yes the sunset at the coast was amazing but equally here were colours stunning and the trees silhouetted. I eventually found a stopping place on the narrow road, grabbed the camera and stepped out. Just a few photos but such a memory and a reminder of God's creativity and generosity in giving us a wonderful world. A world of beauty and with people who can make a difference to others just by saying hello.

Gracious and loving God thank you for all your gifts to us. Amen

## 28<sup>th</sup> November – Rev Barbara Winner



As a child it always seemed to me that boys had more interesting toys than girls! (hopefully that is no longer the case?) I would have loved a train set! It also seemed that they had much more exciting job prospects ahead of them as well. A train driver! Now there's a frightening prospect! I did love going to the station at Hunstanton and watching the steam trains. The one in the picture is coming into the station at Pickering to take us to Whitby. What is it about working steam trains? I think for me its something about its sheer power and yet it stays (hopefully!) on track. Powerful and dependable. Remind you of anyone? Perhaps a working steam train is a bit like God. So – 'Get on board little children – there's room for many a more.'

### 30<sup>th</sup> November – Judith Semmons

I remember as a student...(many years ago), feeling very proud after purchasing a few plants for my room; one room in a house with four other students: no heating and it would probably be condemned now with our current health and safety regulations!

Not surprisingly, the plants struggled to thrive. When I returned home for holidays I'd take the plants to an elderly lady, Elsie, who I became friends with. Elsie would frequently comment that the plants were always given back to me in a far better state than when they had arrived!

What was the difference? Elsie gave them time and attention; warmth and probably most importantly water - the latter which I often forgot! It was inevitable that on my last bus journey to Elsie with these plants, I can still remember studying my rubber plant and watching the last leaf drop off!

I am reminded of the story of the Samaritan woman at the well in John's gospel chapter 4 v 1 - 26, especially verse 11 - 14: The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The photo shows two of my current healthy plants which started as tiny shoots: I have learnt from experience - they have been given plenty of attention. What attention are we giving to our spiritual life today?

