

Facebook Thoughts for the Day – January 2021

6th January – Rev Liz Jolly (in memory of Liz, we re-posted her last Thought for the Day)

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.



7th January – Aileen Fox

Most of us enjoy a Christmas tree and it has always featured in my life. However, obtaining one hasn't always been easy. I do love a real one but always wanted one with roots if possible, so it had a longer life in the garden. In fact, I grew pine trees one year but before I could use them, we moved house and the trees were too big to move. One year whilst living in Suffolk we went to a managed wood with my parents where you could dig your own. One for us, one for my parents and then they asked for a small one for grandma (it flourished in her garden). Never again was my husband's comment, he did the digging! Then there was the year we left it late, Roger wasn't well so with a 5-year-old in tow I tried to buy a tree, any tree. The only one left was a lopsided one which in desperation I bought, potted it up and turned the bare side to



the wall. It remained a family joke. But whether it was rooted, lopsided or later artificial it didn't matter. On my tree are decorations with memories of my grandma, olive wood ones from my mum, and many decorations bought on holidays and visits. This year the tree was full, and each decoration reminded me of someone or something. The crocheted snowflakes bought from an older lady in Prague supplementing her income. Straw bells handmade in Czech Republic, gifts from friends, and handmade snowmen from a friend. My tree has a story to tell of love and friendship. Sadly, some of the givers are no longer with us, but the tree shows their love and memories of them. Whether there will be room to add another tree with decorations from my mum and dad which I've just found for another year remains to be seen. But my tree always reminds me of love, happy memories. Love is so important. Love came down at Christmas in Jesus the greatest gift we could be given. In this unprecedented time let us remember love and show love in all we do.

Loving God thank you for loving us and sending Jesus, help us to show that love to all. Amen

8th January – Rev Barbara Winner

While I was walking home on Dec 23rd I saw this snowdrop bravely pushing its way through the soil. I sent the photo to my friend Liz with the caption 'They can't lock down Spring! She replied saying that I should send this in for a 'thought for the day' – so here it is!



9th January – Wilbert Davies

I have always derived great comfort, particularly at this time of year, from the beginning of a poem quoted by King George VI in his Christmas message in 1939. At the time, the author was unknown, but it is now attributed to Minnie Haskins (1875 - 1957); I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown"; and he replied, "Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light, and safer than a known way."



11th January – Dee Moden

New Year is a time of renewal – looking back – looking forward – and moving on. Last year for Alan and I was a complete change of life as we moved from Lincolnshire to Norfolk we, as others, didn't envisage the added changes that Covid-19 would bring.

This virus has brought and taught us many things in its wake, and hindsight is a wonderful thing, to say what should or should not have been done. We had hindsight as we celebrated Jesus' birth, knowing what was to become of him, the things that Mary didn't know! Would anything have happened differently? Would those disciples acted differently? I am sure they would, but events had to take their course. It has been a bad start for 2021 but there is hope on the horizon!



Looking at the fresh growth - shoots appearing in our gardens – flowers appearing - evenings getting slightly lighter, all remind us that God works in wonderful miraculous ways and is here among us, working his purpose out. This is God's world and we are his people he feels our pain, he comforts the bereaved, he shares our joys and sorrows and sheds light in our darkness. There will be light after darkness, joy after sorrow, peace after pain. There will be rejoicing hugging and getting together. In the meantime, we obey rules, hope, pray and show God's love to each other.

12th January – Rev Jacqui Horton

In the first lockdown, I found it really helpful to build small points of spirituality into my day. Going into the garden for 20 minutes at coffee time (well, it was Spring!), trying to remember to say the Lord's Prayer at 12 noon, praying for peace in the world in the early evening. I am doing something similar this time round - let me know if you want to join me - and so I was really grateful to Sam (Samantha) when she drew our attention to the way Rev Kate Bottley is lighting a candle at 6 o'clock each day on her Instagram account. We thought we could do something similar, only leave the flame for 60 seconds to assist viewers in praying for the people or situations of which they are aware. Thank you Sam for starting us off yesterday evening, I think this is going to be a really helpful, and meaningful, reflective point for me each evening [#januarylight21](#)



13th January – Sam Parfitt



Usually at the start of a New Year, I brace myself for the deluge of adverts, celebrity influencers and articles that are trying to convince us that we need to be a new person - New Year-New You!! Usually, I sigh and wonder that if I am wonderfully made in God's image, then what's wrong with last year's me? There's often a focus on us not being 'good' enough and changing who we are or what we look like. This year however, I have noticed that this is not the case, instead, there is a long overdue focus on wellbeing in a holistic sense. Self-care and body positivity are the buzz words, being kind to ourselves and loving who we are, rather than beating ourselves up into a furore trying to sculpt a six pack or a 'bikini body'.

So, as we begin this year, please know that you are loved as you are, beautifully and wonderfully made. Come as you are, rest your troubles and burdens at the feet of our Lord, and together we begin this year's journey.

14th January – Rev Cliff Shanganya



Jeremiah 29:11 NLT

For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Our Future and Hope

What an encouraging word this must have been to the Israelites, who had just learned that they would be exiled to Babylon for seventy years. When chaos and confusion were rampant, when their lives had been turned upside down, this word of hope came to guide them through their years of captivity. For such a time as this when our lives don't make sense and our futures look hopeless, the profound truth in these verses gives us a new perspective. God says, "*I know the plans I have for you*" He's not hoping he can conjure something up, nor is he wringing his hands and wondering what went wrong. His eternal plans for you and for me were established before the foundation of the world, and nothing can derail them.

What is the condition for God's plans being fulfilled in our lives? This passage tells us to seek him earnestly—not halfheartedly, not occasionally, but with all of our hearts. Through earnest prayer we can expect to see his good plans for our future and our hope. In the process, we can also expect to find God.

Let us pray,

LORD, thank you that you have planned a future and a hope for our lives. Because of your power and your faithfulness, we know that nothing in our lives is outside your control. Help us to fully and willingly submit to your will for our future. Draw us to look for you earnestly and to pray wholeheartedly. May our hope be grounded in your unchanging character. Amen.

Have a lovely and blessed day.

15th January – Judith Semmons

I make no apology that I'm sharing a thought that popped up on Facebook some time back, courtesy of a friend of mine. So some of you may have also seen it. The words seem very appropriate in our current climate: we've all had our personal storms over this past year; some have been far greater for some people than others. And as written below, people may be changed by whatever they have experienced this year: Being unable to visit family members or friends in nursing homes; limited contact with relatives such as grandchildren; anxiety issues due to the Covid pandemic; worrying about someone's health; feeling isolated; the more recent second peak. I could go on. But the flip side is being able to witness how people have rallied around and come together to support each other; how people have been innovative with different ways of communicating and how technology has helped this. So let's find time to be thankful for what has been done in a positive way rather than what hasn't. And let's remember the hymn - Singing the Faith 645 - 'Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife.....We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll; fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.'

"And once the storm is over you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in."

- Haruki Murakami

16th January – Aileen Fox

Perhaps not a topic you want to think about as a thought for the day, but it is something that has affected me this year. I became acutely aware of a rash on my face mainly under the skin, at the start of the first lockdown. At my age (a significant birthday this year) a rash on my face is unusual and eventually I went to see the pharmacist who thought it was caused by a virus and would disappear. Three months on and it was still present. I must immediately say it is hardly noticeable to anyone else and I do cover it up. Eventually I sought other help and after the GP triage system was seen and diagnosed with Rosacea and prescribed a cream. But something he said brought me up sharp and memories came flooding back. He asked why was I concerned? And I replied that I had suffered badly from acne when younger, and seen a dermatologist.

One evening after I had left the TV on and a programme came up called skin. It followed the journey of young people with different skin conditions, and some of them were hard to look at. I heard the desperation in their voices and how they described the comments and the stares from other people. I immediately remembered the comment from a young girl when I was in my late teens asking why my face was burnt! I had felt self-conscious, embarrassed, unfortunately I also have quite sensitive skin and the treatments prescribed were often too harsh. I remember the many face washes and creams. I felt for these youngsters and so glad of the help they were receiving which was making a difference to their lives. Yet there are many who will not be able to access these specialised treatments. There is a message for us in how we react to people and an even bigger example if we look at the healing Jesus did with those suffering from Leprosy and other skin diseases.

Loving Lord help us to be welcoming to everyone regardless of how they look. Amen

18th January – We think of **Rev Liz Jolly** today and her family as her funeral is held at Wendling Chapel. She wrote this Thought for the Day for us back in August;

The old couple

The dog and her companion have been together now for several years, they understand each other. They have their own way of communicating, and in that communication they know what the other is thinking. They don't always agree and sometimes one of them has to be firm with the other in order to get the point across, but through it all, they love each other.

The actor Wendy Craig, discovered prayer and the need to talk to God when her old dog died. She realised that on their walks she had been talking to the dog, and now she needed to talk to God.

Some people feel the need to communicate with God, and they might call it prayer, just as much as the old dog needs to communicate with her companion. Understanding and love are part of the companionship, and it gives a wholeness to the relationship. It does not switch on or off, it is part of the bond that is a constant part of life.

Do you think dogs pray?



19th January – Deacon Jen Woodfin

On a walk round Swaffham, fairly early on Saturday morning, we passed this avenue of trees. It had never really struck me how they all lined up and each one enhanced the effect of the next one. I think it was partly due to the contrast of the darkness of the silhouette of the trees against the brightness of the snow. There was a simple, stark beauty about the scene. Sometimes simple beauty is what we need to see.

We can so easily over complicate our faith and understanding of God. But whoever we are, and whatever we do, or have done, God simply loves us. He sent Jesus to show us that love and to give us hope, for now and for eternity. Let us all keep hold of the simple beauty of knowing that.



20th January – Sam Parfitt

One of my friends lives and works in Scotland and on Facebook he posted a very nice picture of the college he works at with the snowy mountains in the background. He is Master of Classics at the College and underneath he had written *Vides ut alta stet nive candidum Soracte*. Now my education at Comprehensive school didn't cover Latin or Greek and sadly I have never had the opportunity to learn as an adult (believe it or not it is quite difficult to find Ancient Greek and Latin classes locally!) So, not to be deterred, and curious about what he had written, I had a google, and learnt that it was the first line of a poem by Horace, called Ode to Thaliarchus. I was able to find a version translated into English and it is an interesting poem which I encourage you to have a look at sometime. The translation I found was made by a man called Patrick Leigh Fermor who, during the second world war, along with his men had captured a German General and were fleeing the German troops who were in hot pursuit (presumably keen to have their General back!), making their escape over the Cretan mountain range. They had been trudging through snow and rain for two days and, exhausted, had gone to sleep on some rocks. When they woke at dawn, they saw the most beautiful sunrise over the mountain crest and the German General looked at it and spoke the first line of the poem " *Vides ut alta stet nive candidum Soracte*" . His English captor knew the poem and finished the rest of the



five stanzas. A long silence followed and the German Major eventually said " Ach so, Herr Major". Patrick said that it was a strange moment as it felt like the war had ceased to exist, rather beautifully he then, in his memoirs says 'We had both drunk at the same fountains long before; and things were different between us for the rest of our time together.' This moment strikes me as being a particularly wonderful reminder that however different we might seem to one another, there will always be a fountain we have drunk at together. Perhaps a particularly apt thought as this is the week of Christian Unity!

22nd January – Judith Semmons

It might seem very strange sharing a photograph of our decorated Christmas tree from 2020: It is a tree that holds memories; just as people have been sharing their tributes and memories of Liz Jolly.

The significance of this tree is the fairy - purchased, (when I was primary school age), from our local Post Office, probably bought in a rush I'm guessing, when my mum suddenly realised that the usual fairy decoration had broken; hidden away for a year, only to discover that it could no longer be used. Now this fairy has pride of place each year and gives me the opportunity to reflect on memories; family time; my late mum; big family gatherings, especially at Christmas.

My mum died unexpectedly shortly before her 73rd birthday. After her death whenever I listened to 'Bring him home' from Les Miserables I cried; a reminder of my mum as it was sung at her funeral. Now I love hearing it and have used it on many occasions in church services.



As I write these thoughts, I'm mindful that Liz Jolly's funeral was on Monday. For some time, reminders of Liz may prompt a mixture of emotions; sadness, happiness, confusion - who knows? The world is a very emotional place at the moment, not just because of the covid pandemic, and many people are hurting, fearful and confused. Let's hope, however, that over time some of those hurts can be turned into happy memories of people we have had the pleasure to have known but have lost. Let's also hope that we can use our faith to help those who have many questions but no answers.

23rd January – Rev Graham Pickhaver

Do you remember Binti Jua, a Western lowland gorilla that weighed about 200 pounds who lived in Chicago's Brookfield Zoo? In August 1996 she made headline news around the world.

A local family were looking forward to a day at the Zoo with their young son. Watching the gorilla the boy suddenly lost his grip and fell 15 feet into the enclosure joining seven gorillas including Binti Jua (meaning: daughter of sunlight). The boy lay there unconscious. Everyone was absolutely terrified and no one knew what to do except to raise the alarm. Similar episodes like this have occurred elsewhere but the only course of action that the keepers could take was to kill the animal and no doubt keepers were prepared to take similar action that day.

But the unbelievable happened! This giant of an animal gentle lived up to her name bringing sunlight both to the little boy, his family and the watching crowd. Binti Jua picked him up and cradled him like a mother nursing her baby carrying him to the enclosure's entrance and gently laid him down for the paramedics. As a reward a Chicago grocer sent her 25 pounds of bananas!

A story that brings greatness and gentleness together!

We read something similar to this in Isaiah 42 which is one of those great Messianic passages that tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ (we know of course Isaiah 53 that describes His sufferings). Isaiah tells us about God's great power in creation, everything incredibly was made by Him out of nothing! (Hebrews 11:3). Isaiah also tells us that God is the source of all life even the breathe (Acts 17:25). In response to this what can we say except, 'How Great Thou Art!'



Great as our Sovereign God is yet how gentle he becomes to the believer. As children we would sing, 'Gentle Jesus meek and mild' (don't forget His greatness!). And Isaiah shows us the gentle nature and care of the Messiah. In His ministry He's not going to shout out and draw attention to Himself but will come alongside those who feel like bruised reeds that need strengthening; dimly burning wicks that need rekindling; prisoners that need releasing, and the blind that need restored sight.

Perhaps you feel like that today – the flame is going out, you feel bruised and open to the wind, you are like a prisoner bound in the chains of sin but remember like Binti the Sovereign and All-powerful Lord gently takes you by the hand granting forgiveness and strength for another day (v6).

25th January – Rev Rosemary Wakelin

Long ago I ran a Youth club. One of the boys got into trouble and he and his parents were summoned to attend at the police station. I think that because of his youth it had been decided to deal with it locally rather than bring in the weight of the law. The interview was in the evening, there was no bus and their car had broken down. I offered to take them. The mother was upset and ashamed and refused to go. We arrived and were given a strong reprimand on the boy's bad behaviour and the results of bad parenting. The father did not mention that I was not his wife, and I said nothing either. It gave me an interesting insight. I had got involved because I wanted to be there for my Youth Club member, I wanted to support him. What happened meant that I was with him, which is different. When I became a prison Chaplain I did it because I wanted to be for people in shame and disgrace and to try and help. Maybe this was enough for some, but with others, as I got to know them more I found I needed to be with them, to share the shame, to get alongside them. This altered the relationship and enabled a different conversation. Reading the Gospels makes me think increasingly that this was what Jesus did. I had stumbled on the difference between "for" and "with", Jesus set out knowing it. He did not approach the needy from a position of superiority but identified with them, which led him to the Cross. As Wesley said "Best of all God is with us".

26th January – Rev Jacqui Horton

It is interesting looking at the 'traffic' on this Facebook page and seeing which posts get most attention. And, of course, because of the way Facebook works, the more engagement a post gets then the more attention it generates. I have been fascinated to see that our candle-lighting photos at 6 pm each day in January have attracted lots of interest. It has been fun doing them as well as spiritually rewarding using them to pray for specific matters during the 60 seconds.

However! The circuit staff have been discussing how long we should continue this initiative. Things that go on without end can become stale and taken for granted. Should we end the [#januarylight21](#) candles at the end of January. Or at 'Candlemass' which is February 2nd? Or continue to the end of February or the end of the strict lockdown? All feedback and suggestions welcome!



So - what is my thought? Here it is: messages - whether written or verbal - seem to be more attractive and command more attention if they contain images or, indeed, music or, indeed, short videos. So, why don't we in the church do this more often?

27th January – Sam Parfitt

As I stood in the kitchen this morning getting ready to bake our usual loaf, the words I spoke yesterday at a service for Christian Unity suddenly came back to me - "give us this day our daily bread", which is one of the lines of the Lord's Prayer. When Jesus first recited this prayer, bread was a staple food, it provided nourishment and life, people wouldn't have gotten very far without it. Looking at the ingredients before me it occurred to me that the ingredients by themselves were all okay, but it is when they are brought together that they really flourish and create something special. In the simple and humble act of making a loaf, I was reminded that in being brought together as the body of Christ we bring taste and flavour to one another's lives, and I was reminded how thankful I am to be one of the ingredients along with you all.



28th January – Rev Anne Richardson



I've really enjoyed seeing all the recent Facebook posts about snow. Snow as it's falling – snow laying on the driveway – snow on the rooftops – snow in the park – snowmen of various sizes – many sporting a facemask! Why are we so fascinated by a little frozen precipitation? Perhaps because it has the novelty factor, especially for us in Norfolk? Perhaps because we can interact with it – take photos and videos, and make something from it? Perhaps because of the playful element – visions of snowball fights and sledging downhill? Maybe it's the enjoyment of watching young children experience it for the first time?

A few years ago I went on holiday to Iceland, based in Akureyri, in the north. (There were direct flights from Norwich which just made it so easy!) It was absolutely fabulous – and the snow!!! WOW!!! Thick and crunchy and so different from the snow we had experienced before! My understanding of snow grew through this lovely holiday.

We may think we know about God and our faith in Him, but truthfully, there is something new to experience and to learn every day. May our eyes and hearts be open. New every morning is the love our waking and uprising prove! (Based on wonderful verses from Lamentations 3:22-23)

What have you been learning recently? What new insights can you share?

29th January – Rev Barbara Winner



On Covenant Sunday I set out for a long walk. Not long after I left home the darkest of clouds were gathering and heading my way! However, I was determined to reach the highest point (not that high in Norfolk but I love the view over the fields.) Before I made it the heavens opened but as I was well wrapped up I kept going. As I reached what I was aiming for, a full rainbow appeared in the sky before me. It only lasted a few minutes but the sight of it was exhilarating. I walked home in the rain with a picture in my mind of a full church on Easter day and the organist playing powerfully - Christ the Lord is risen today: Alleluia! All creation joins to say: Alleluia! Guess what I was singing as I headed home!

We are in another dark place with a lock down of weeks facing us. It might be hard going for all sorts of reasons but we will arrive home and we can keep singing (safely) as we travel. And on the way God can still surprise us.

30th January – Judith Semmons

Like many other people I woke up the other weekend to a blanket of snow; a real picture postcard scene. By the time I went out to walk our dog, several snowmen had been built; some at quite an impressive height and others with innovative decorations such as sunglasses for the eyes; children's spades for arms. Children were being pulled along in sledges, having great fun. The scene seemed to capture a lightness in people: even our dog had a spring in her step and enjoyed rolling in the snow. A few friends shared photos on Facebook with comments such as: 'Lovely to see the children playing in the snow' - just what they needed.'

The flip side was the opposite comment from someone else: ' Snow. That's all we need! It will be difficult for people to get to work, especially those working in hospitals.'

We all have different perspectives on life; whatever it might bring: Some people might have managed to be very philosophical about the latest covid lockdown; others might be dealing with it with despair. Some people may be feeling bored and at a loose end; others, such as key workers, might be rushed off their feet, exhausted. Some parents might be struggling with home schooling whilst others could be embracing it. How individuals deal with all of this and other aspects of life could be influenced by their 'starting point' and different experiences in life. We are not to judge: we are created in God's image but we are all unique and respond to things in very different ways. Let's remember to support people where there starting point is and whatever pathway it takes.

Photo courtesy of Marcio Freitas

