

Facebook Posts October 2023



A Thought for the Day from Deacon Jen:



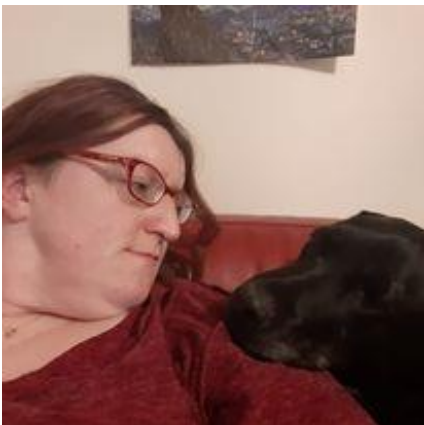
Following on from Rev Annes reflection last week, I, too, was inspired to think about conkers. Or, rather, the shells they were in. I then compared the shells from a horse-chestnut tree to that of a sweet chestnut tree. At first glance they seemed similar but they are quite different but achieve the same effect – that of keeping creatures well away until the shell breaks open.

Perhaps we are a little like that. We put up protective shells around us in different ways at different times of our lives. In particular, when we feel vulnerable, we can often cut out those very people who love us and want to help us. It may be that we need courage to break that prickly shell and show our inner

selves in order to move forward.

Whatever our hesitation in sharing with people, we know that God is always there for us. As it says in Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. God may lead us to speak to someone. So have courage, have heart and show the real you.

A thought from Sam Parfitt:



It has been an emotionally heavy time for me just lately, punctuated by saying goodbye to my beloved companion of 16 years, Deefa the Labrador. It can be hard in times like these to look forward, one might think of Janus with a sense of longing, to be gifted the ability to look forwards and backwards at the same time and hold these spaces of transition.

Scripture is full of passages of encouragement for hard times, one of my favourites is Isaiah 40:31 "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Beautiful words, but what does renewing our strength look like? I think this will be different for all of us, at different junctures in our lives. For me, nestling in our community of Christ has been a salve, especially the laughter that I have found on three separate occasions this week during services of worship and harvest gatherings - my strength has been renewed and my heart lifted.

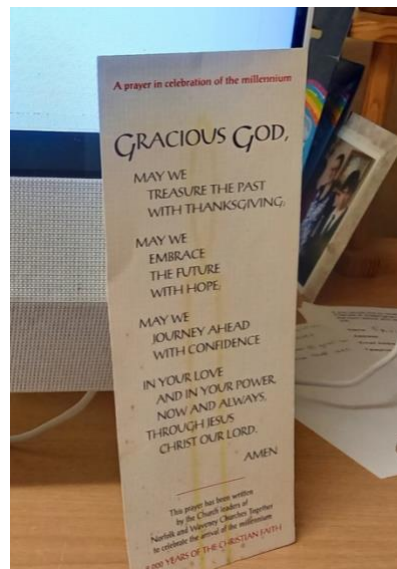
I have perhaps, been reminded that gathering in is not just for wheat, barley and tins of peas, but also a sacred community space, which holds abstract realities, lived out in disparate moments of hearts and souls, of loves lost, hardships unnumbered, joyfulness and laughter.
May we all be safely gathered this harvest time.



Rev Jacqui writes

Sitting on my desk at the moment is a card which has a prayer on it. It was in the Bible of a church member whose funeral I took a few months ago and the family wanted me to read it at her funeral. I came across it again recently and I need to return it to the family. But, in the meantime, it is propped up by my computer and I am finding it very helpful. The card tells me that it was written by Church leaders of Norfolk and Waveney Churches Together to celebrate the arrival of the millennium and to mark 2,000 years of the Christian faith. And, this is the prayer:

**Gracious God,
May we treasure the past
with thanksgiving,
May we embrace the future
with hope,
May we journey ahead
with confidence
in your love and in your power,
now and always,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.-**





A thought from Rev Rosemary Wakelin:

We have it so easy. There is no one making a note that I go to Church each Sunday or the sort of people with whom I associate. I receive no threats and there are no limits on what I do. But that's not the same everywhere. Our lovely, muddled democracy, with all its faults, is taken for granted. Also being a woman is nothing like the disadvantage it once was - even when I was a child. I remember the horror of having to wear a hat, not just to Church, but school and so on, and wearing trousers was considered a bit "fast".

Our Milkman, (we had them once) whistled cheerfully as he delivered the milk, and I worked hard on my whistle. My Granny observed "A whistling woman and a crowing hen is good for neither God nor men", but she never stopped me.

We forget how things have changed or how different it is in some repressive regimes. We need to keep in our prayers brothers and sisters for whom this is not the case. It's all about Power and Control which involves repression and violence. Freedom though, involves responsibility and caring, taking an active part in the community and being ready to speak out when that is threatened - I think that's what Jesus did.

Rev Anne writes:

Today has a reputation! Be careful not to walk under any ladders or spill any salt!

Yes, I know!!! No need to tell me off in the comments below!
Christians do not need to be superstitious. If we trust in God, how can we think that anything in our life will be influenced by it being the 13th day of the month, and a Friday?

Yet there is a cultural influence at play here. We are affected by our upbringing, and what we watch and listen to. St Paul writes in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."



What is influencing you?

A Thought for the Day from Deacon Jen:



I love this photo of my sister's dog, Toby, eyeing up a rather large mushroom, or is it a toadstool? He was walking past and then stopped, thought for all of one second, and then went up to it. After smelling it, he toddled off quite happily. He was just curious, without any fear, and wanted to see if it was any good for him. The weather was lovely and we enjoyed the walk back to the car, but, in the back of my mind, I had the sense that I could learn something from that encounter. There was something to think about regarding curiosity. More than that, the question arose in my mind – how do we relate curiosity to faith?

It could be seen that curiosity is the opposite of faith. After all, in Hebrews 1:1 it states: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see". On one level that doesn't seem to offer much of a place for curiosity. To be certain almost implies a solidity and rigidity in one's thoughts. And yet, if we think of faith as a journey and a progression, then that opens up a much more flexible, and exciting, approach. To be curious in life and faith allows us the possibility of always growing, of always learning. We can be curious in our faith without fear as we can be certain that God is with us. We have a companion on the way with Jesus and the Holy Spirit will lead us through that curiosity and growth in faith.

Sam's reflection for today - usually I offer a reflection that I've thought about for a little while, and I had certainly gone through the reflective process - however, watching the news this morning I feel compelled to forgo what I had penned (and I hope you'll forgive me) to share this international prayer of peace and invite you to pray it with me today;

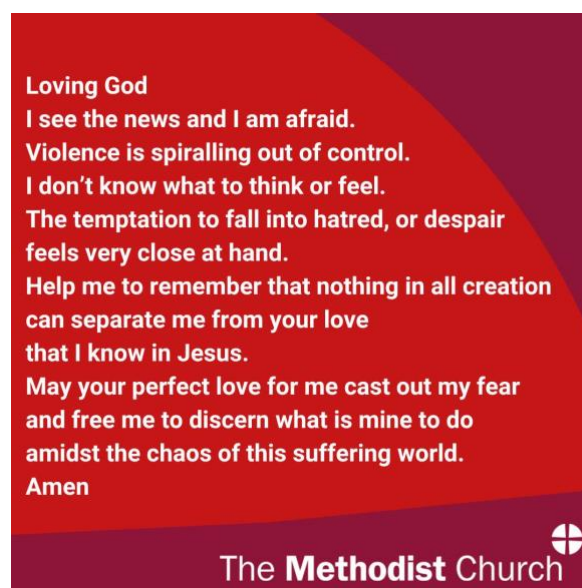
Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth

Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust

Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace

Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe
Amen





A thought from Rev Rosemary:

Caesarea Philippi. Matthew 16:13-20

Alone in human history, Jesus had a unique task - to truly live out his Father's intention for the human race - to become God's family. He alone had that relationship with his Heavenly Father which God had intended.

We can only guess at what Jesus had been thinking ahead of his question to the disciples. He must have agonised over the extraordinary implications of his sense of call. Was he deluded - arrogant - or was it really his divine vocation? And if so what sort of Messiah? He knew the expectation, a leader, divinely appointed to boot out the Romans and make Israel great again. But he was deeply in touch with the profound prophecies, which tell of a different Messiah - whose path would lead through suffering to achieve a very different sort of victory - for Love. This must have been the substance of his regular prayer time. He had been long enough with his disciples to enquire what they were thinking, did they recognise his vocation? Were they able to accept such a different understanding? Hence his question. And Peter gives the right answer! Jesus is overjoyed! Peter's got it! So Jesus goes on to see Peter's faith as the foundation for the Church. Of course, we know that he hadn't! It took the major events of the Crucifixion and Resurrection before he understood. But he got there in the end!



Rev Anne writes: As I've been walking the dog recently, I've seen more squirrels than normal. I wonder if there have been more squirrels born this year? But then also, it may well be that they have been hidden before by the leaves and the undergrowth. Now autumn is here and the plants are beginning to die back and the leaves fall, the squirrels have less places to hide!!!

A number of our church folks have been going through big changes, or approaching big changes at the moment. Often, particularly as we age, changes are forced upon us and we feel we don't really have much choice. When illness comes, similarly, we have to adapt. It feels a bit like our personal autumn - some things fall, others need to be left behind. These are not easy. But sometimes they reveal something that may have been previously hidden from our sight.

As people of faith, we are often too busy with one thing or another, and it's not until we are made to stop, that we can see God's presence with us, and God's activity in our lives and in our prayers. Of course, we should all make time for quiet times and quiet days, just to do that. (Though if you're like me, it's often something on the bottom of the To Do list!)

As we watch the leaves fall from the trees, be reminded that it can be a beautiful thing to let go - and let God!





Thought for the Day from Rev Jacqui:

I drove down to Southampton a week or two ago which meant a few motorways: M11, M25, M3. As I was driving along one of them, one of those flashing signs over the carriageway gave me a message: 'Don't hog the middle lane'. I wanted to cheer! If there is one thing that drives me mad it is cars hogging the middle lane on a motorway. Another sign appeared: 'Keep left unless you are overtaking'. Exactly! This is what I want signs to say - keep left, don't hog the middle lane. I continued to drive. Did cars keep left unless they were overtaking? No they didn't. Did they hog the middle lane? Of course they still did.

It is good to get this off my chest and onto social media. As for a Thought for the Day, I could say something about things that make you cross, or something about helpful signs, or something about people not doing what they are supposed to do. Take your pick! But, perhaps remember the verse we thought about during our Big Sunday service this last week: 'Be still and know that I am God'. Not whilst we are driving though!