

**All Saints' Church
Cottenham with Rampton**

**Pastoral Letter #70
Wed 9th February 2022**



Dear Church Family,

I do hope that this letter finds you well. I'm aware that a number of us have succumbed to Covid-19 over the last few weeks (including me) but thankfully most seem not to be seriously affected and recover quickly. We are very fortunate in the UK to have access to effective vaccines.

Marie and I took some time out on Monday morning to have some quiet time together at Madingley Church. Afterwards, we took some time to walk in the grounds and enjoy the beautiful snowdrops growing amongst the bare trees, nature's reminder that spring is around the corner. Our Bible text for the morning was Ezekiel 37: 1-14 where God, in a vision, brings Ezekiel, the prophet, into a wide valley filled with dead, brittle, dried out bones. Ezekiel is then told to prophesy to the bones, to tell them that they will be filled again with life. The vision ends with God promising the exiled people of Israel that they will return to live in their own land.

The material we used (Joyce Rupp's 'May I have This Dance?') encouraged us to think of times in our lives when 'dry bones' feelings happen, when we feel a deadness of spirit. This could be because of problems at work, family demands, difficult relationships, bodies that ache with pain, plans that keep going askew. Life's expected turns, extended illness, or the eruption of harsh criticism can also lead us to the valley of lifelessness. 'Dry bones' feelings often arise in places where winter wears on and on and, if I'm honest, the ongoing uncertainty around Covid-19 has led me to experience 'dry bones' feelings at times. We come out of lockdown, rates are down. We begin to look to the future ... and along comes another variant more virulent than the last. It's easy to become discouraged and lose enthusiasm.

What do we do when we experience these feelings? It can be useful to ask ourselves: What is missing from my life? What am I ignoring or forgetting? What am I sidestepping or deliberately avoiding? Is there any action I need to take in order to get out of the valley of dry bones? At times like these we need to be open, to pray for guidance and direction. We can also imagine the breath of God being shared with us. Just as the Lord said to the dry bones in the vision: *'I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life'*, we can imagine a divine Presence breathing life and strength into us. When we wake up with that 'worn-out-before-the-day-starts' feeling, we can pause to imagine the Holy One loving us, holding us tenderly, breathing life into us.

It's not always easy to believe that there can be life waiting to dance in dry bones. Sometimes it takes a great effort to move toward life and to believe that the dry bones will dance again. Being patient with ourselves is one way to do this. Another is to go beyond our own pain, to deliberately try to be a life-giver to another. It's always surprising that, in giving to another, we often receive much more in return.

Over the last few weeks, the Bible readings in church on a Sunday have encouraged us to reflect on how we work together as the Body of Christ. It's important for us to gather together (safely), to worship as a church family and to support and encourage one another. If, for whatever reason, you are not coming to Church at the moment and would welcome a home visit or to receive Communion at home, do please let me know. If you have access to the Internet, there is always a Zoom service on Sundays at 6pm. Just email Cheryl Lowe (cheryl@cynewulf.co.uk) for the link.

Lent will soon be upon us and, this year, I'd like to invite the whole church to engage in the Church of England resource '*Live Lent: Embracing Justice*'. I will order sufficient booklets for everyone so people can follow the material either at home individually, together with the family or in a Lent group. More details will follow.

Over the next few days, all church members will receive a letter about both regular giving and leaving a legacy to the church in your will. It's always a bit awkward talking about money but very necessary when our outgoings regularly exceed our income. Please can I encourage you all to pray carefully about your giving, whether you're new to the church or have been part of the church for many years. Please do speak to Frances Horgan, Treasurer (250000), or myself if you'd like more information.

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

Revd Lynda Davies

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