

**All Saints' Church
Cottenham with Rampton**

**Pastoral Letter #74
August 2022**



Dear Church Family,

Earlier this year, the Australian airline Qantas announced that passengers will soon be able to fly from Heathrow to Sydney in a direct, twenty-four hour flight. *'It's the last frontier and the final fix for the tyranny of distance,'* proclaimed the CEO.

Of course, the far side of the world is not any closer – but we will get there faster! And in the story that Qantas' CEO wants to tell, that's a victory. Distance is an oppressive tyrant, forcibly extracting our precious time and effort from us when all we want is to be on our summer holidays already. But now, we have been liberated from life's slow lane! It's time to *'dream bigger, fly further, and create a brighter future together'* (in Australia presumably).

If you have family in Australia and like to visit, this may well be good news to you. I *do* have cousins and several aunts and uncles in Australia but the sheer distance has always put me off visiting them. As I don't know them that well – they left England when I was a young child – it isn't something that necessarily concerns me. But, the possibility of travelling quicker (anywhere!) *is* good news for someone like me. I prefer to cycle instead of walk. And driving gets me places even quicker. A direct flight to Sydney? If I was ever tempted to travel to Australia, I'd definitely buy a ticket!

Sometimes though, I find myself thinking about where I need to be next *more* than where I am now. I risk being less than fully present with the people and tasks in front of me. It seems like the faster I've learned to go and the more I've been able to cram in, the more I've felt the need to do and the faster I've wanted to cram it. My coffee mug 'Little Miss Busy' says more about me than I probably want it to!

There's a tyranny at work here, for sure. But it's not the one Qantas claim to have overthrown. I know this because despite doing my best to ruthlessly eliminate it, I find myself under its coercive power. Its name is 'Hurry'.

And then, I think about Jesus' ability to completely opt out of hurry. Walking was his preferred method of travel (granted, the only alternative was a donkey!), but this allowed him to notice more of the world and how it spoke of God. On one occasion, as he and the disciples were returning from Judea to Galilee, he stopped along the way at the well in the Samaritan village of Sychar. No doubt he was feeling tired and in need of rest. Whilst there might have been a desire to press on – there was so much to do and so little time to do it – Jesus seemingly was *not* in a hurry. He never appeared to operate out of the fear that he might not finish everything. He knew the importance of stopping, of pausing along the way to be refreshed. And, by his example, he gives us permission to do the same.

When we sit down, we take the weight off our feet and we are able to rest. When we stop what we are doing, we are able to recharge our batteries and be refreshed. Time and time again we read in the gospels of Jesus taking time out and simply resting. Maybe, during what's left of our glorious summer, we can learn from his example.

If we learn *his* ways, we can not only call out the stories that airline CEOs tell. We can quietly but defiantly push back. By lingering a little longer with friends. By talking rather than emailing. By choosing the checkout staffed by a person rather than a machine. With acts like these, we can resist the tyranny of hurry, and tell a better story while we do it.

I love the story of Bishop Stephen Cottrell, now Archbishop of York, who caused a stir a few years ago at his local railway station by handing out egg timers to commuters. His encouragement to them was to find at least 3 minutes each day learning the 'joyful art of doing nothing'. It was his way of urging people to detox themselves from the busyness of life and discover what happens when we stop and rest, ditch our endless 'to do' lists, resist the constant stream of emails and challenge our 24/7 culture.

So my hope for all of us this August, whether we're going away or staying at home, is to practise the art of stopping for a while, to take a leaf out of Jesus' book and to rest more.

Whilst many people are away over the school holiday period, it is still lovely to connect with folk on a Sunday morning so, if you're not away, do try and come. Also remember that 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.

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

Revd Lynda Davies

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