

All Saints' Church
Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #86

January/February 2024

Dear Church Family,

On 25th January the lectionary readings for the day on 'The Conversion of Paul' included Ezekiel 3: 22-27 as well as Philippians 3: 1-14. Do have a quick read of both if you can. God seems to be the habit of knocking people off their high horses so as to set them on their feet. As with Ezekiel, so with Saul becoming Paul.

In the passage from Ezekiel, God grabs him by the shoulder and tells him to get up and go out onto the plain as he wants to speak to him. He does as he's told and we read '*The glory of the Lord was standing there ... and I fell facedown.*' Ezekiel is totally overwhelmed by the glory of the divine presence and falls to the ground. And like Paul, who similarly had an experience of falling to the ground on the road to Damascus (read Acts 9), the first stage of Ezekiel's recovery is paradoxically a kind of dependency and confinement. Ezekiel is bound with mortal cords and cannot speak; Paul is blinded and must be led by the hand, spending three days in darkness neither eating nor drinking.

Perhaps both these impetuous leaders had to learn something of wisdom and humility from the experience of disability and dependence. Certainly, the paradox of strength in weakness became the hallmark of Paul's teaching, indeed his whole life embodied in the paradoxes of the gospel. Malcolm Guite, the great poet, tried to list some in a poem once. It goes like this:

An enemy whom God has made a friend,
A righteous man discounting righteousness,
Last to believe and first for God to send,
He found the fountain in the wilderness.
Thrown to the ground and raised at the same moment,
A prisoner who set his captors free,
A naked man with love his only garment,
A blinded man who helped the world to see.
A Jew who had been perfect in the Law,
Blesses the flesh of every other race
And helps them to see what the apostles saw –
The glory of the Lord in Jesus' face.

Above all, Paul realised that his strength could only come from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he endeavoured to serve for the rest of his earthly life, facing great hardships along the way.

As we seek to serve Jesus in Cottenham with Rampton, at its meeting in January, the PCC (Church Council) agreed the church's Development Action Plan for 2024-5. Some of the things we want to achieve, with God's help, over the next 18 months include:

- Running a Seeker's Course for those exploring faith. We plan to do this after Easter
- Continue to develop our music choices on a Sunday morning so we meet the needs of existing church members and younger families joining us
- Launching some 'Little Saints Plus' sessions to reconnect with children and families who have moved on from the group
- Running 'Summer at All Saints' through the summer holidays with a weekly activity reaching all ages
- Trialling having coffee/tea in the church afterwards to encourage more people to stay and chat
- Furthering plans to install a toilet and servery in both churches
- Building on the success of Oct 2023's service, holding a joint morning Holy Communion Service at Rampton at least twice a year
- Continuing to develop 'Thursday Club' for older members of the Church and community
- Continuing to develop and resource Café Church as our main service for young families
- Intentionally praying before major festivals that non-Christians would come and encounter Jesus.

We pray that, through all we do, we create opportunities through the Holy Spirit for people to experience the divine presence of God, and his Son Jesus Christ. Such an experience transformed the life of Paul and we seek similar transformation among us.

If you are receiving this letter and cannot get to Church, do remember that we are very happy to bring Church to you. If you'd like to receive a visit, have someone pray with you, or receive Home Communion, do let me know. It would be our pleasure.

If you haven't already picked up at Quarterly Date Card from inside church, please do. It lists everything that is happening between now and Easter.

Best wishes,

Revd Lynda Davies

Rector@allsaintscottenham.org.uk

01954 583651