Vicars musings July 14th

Dear Friends.

 I am glad that a least a few of you were able to enter the Patronal festival spirit and enjoy some sunshine and good company last Sunday. I enjoyed the company of friends whom I have not seen since March a much-needed chance to relax and laugh. Let’s hope that next year we will be back in the vicarage garden! I will admit that today being the 15th and St Swithuns day I am praying that the rain forecast will not appear as I have a bowls match this afternoon!

I look forward to next Sunday with excitement and anticipation, I am praying the zoom link work’s and we will not have too many technical hitches! Being back in St Marks on a Sunday morning with a congregation will be strange as my new normal is like you is to peer at a screen on Sunday morning. My next email will include instructions / guidance for those coming to church.

Normally when we meet in person or online with a familiar *‘how are you?*’ most of the time we respond with ‘*I’m fine’*. Recently I have noticed a number of people responding with *‘well I am coping with it all… I suppose’* and with some of my clergy colleagues it’s been *‘I am surviving’* the response also has an air of weariness behind it. How honest we are with our response is a personal choice, however it is an important question to ask of ourselves and to be honest with the answer. How am I- in the body mind and soul? Given the current circumstances some find it difficult to admit they are enjoying lockdown as they know so many are struggling. There are aspects I like and many more I find frustrating; I don’t think any of us really could have predicted the length of time our current situation would last. I sense weariness is coming in as we begin to accept this is the new norm, online meetings and chats are going to become more and more part of our everyday life.

As much as I have enjoyed the Zoom webinars/conferences they can be heavy going especially as I have the concentration span of a gnat at the best of times. I miss the chat and catch ups over coffee and simply being in a new location for the meeting. I will confess that recently in a meeting a clergy colleague discovered the private chat facility on Zoom-it felt like being back at school and passing notes around under the desk! Bishop Jonathan obviously knows about this facility and turned it off for the Croydon area conference this week- he knows his clergy! As I think I have mentioned before we like surety in life and one thing that keeps us going through the tough days, at the moment we do not have that surety.

All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.” ― Julian of Norwich. When she wrote those words, Julian was expressing her attitude toward life and her spirituality. Her spirituality is filled with hope and confidence in the God “who loves us and delights in us,” the God who “will make all things well,” Julian found her surety in the God who created us to live fully the life we have been given. They are Words I have found myself muttering as much as using for a prayer full meditation as I wade through ever changing regulations that affect all aspects of life. Despite our present challenges and for some of us weariness, I am sure God wishes us to be enclosed in love and rest and peace, and that we will see for ourselves that every kind of thing will be well.

I hope that whatever else is happening in your lives you find the space to ask yourself, how am I? That you also find time to be kind to yourself, and know that whilst our lives are so unsure and changeable, we do have surety and consistency in God and his love for us.

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