

Dear all

It was good to have a full church (as far as we are able at present) for our Harvest Festival service last Sunday. Especially good to see the youngsters take part, including being interviewed by Ted.

We have quite a bit of produce, which we will divide up to be sold after the service and annual meeting next week, so please bring some cash and contribute towards the Bin Twinning initiative.

Kate Drewett has reported that we took about 50kg of produce to the Foodbank, donated at the service. If anyone would like to visit the Foodbank to see what happens, please let me know.

The poster used for the Harvest Festival was one designed by the Arthur Rank Centre, and encouraged us to say Thank You to our Farmers. The Arthur Rank Centre is a Christian organisation dedicated to supporting the church in its ministry to the rural community – named after the original benefactor, of Rank Films fame. It is a very worthy organisation to support.

In the latest newsletter, there was this reflection from the CEO, the Revd Claire Maxim – very appropriate for the current circumstances...

### **Praise God for the law!**

#### **Bible reading: Psalm 119:49-56**

Remember your word to your servant,  
in which you have made me hope.  
This is my comfort in my distress,  
that your promise gives me life.  
The arrogant utterly deride me,  
but I do not turn away from your law.  
When I think of your ordinances from of old,  
I take comfort, O Lord.  
Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,  
those who forsake your law.  
Your statutes have been my songs  
wherever I make my home.  
I remember your name in the night, O Lord,  
and keep your law.  
This blessing has fallen to me,  
for I have kept your precepts.

#### *Reflection*

**This Psalm, with its 176 verses, is the longest in the Bible and tends to be split into smaller sections when we read it as part of daily worship. However, there is a coherent thread which runs right through it, that of thanking and praising God for the law.**

It's easy to take a dim view of rules and regulations especially at the moment, where what you can do, with whom and where, depends very much on where you happen to live. We see examples of exemplary rule keeping and flagrant rule breaking from all parts of our society. But the Psalmist praises God for the law,

for the comfort and security it brings. This is quite hard for me to get my head around. I'm a great fan of process, procedure and clarity... as long as it suits me! If I am honest, when I am with good friends or close family, I find abiding by the personal restrictions and social distancing very hard indeed. I understand the need and the fact that doing so will protect me and others, but I don't find much cause for praising. If anything, I worry that it's going to be a long winter this year.

A wise friend once said to me, 'When you don't know what to pray, praise God. Start with praise.' That's why I love Psalm 119. It's a psalm of praise of God and God's gift to us, and because law is an unlikely gift in my eyes, it helps me to appreciate an aspect of God I seldom explore. This psalm gives me an opening to give thanks and praise for each of us and for the God who cares for us.

I am about to embark on a Certificate in Rural and Environmental Studies, organised jointly by A Rocha UK (who validate the Eco-church initiative), the John Ray Initiative, and my old college Ripon College Cuddesdon. I decided to sign up to it partly to focus my own thinking and ongoing study, partly to support the Eco-church award we have received, partly because it is one of the Church of England's '5 Marks of Mission', and partly because I hope it will help me better to understand issues to do with the rural economy and ministry. I'll let you know how it goes on. It will last 2 years, and consists of 6 modules.

I have attached 2 documents for Sunday's Annual Church Meeting. One is a repeat of the [official Annual Report](#) and Accounts for 2019 (already posted). The other is the [reports from churchwardens](#), and the other various groups in the church. There will be a limited number available at the meeting, but for reasons of economy and environment, I don't wish to print off too many. Please let me know if you need to have one with you. It would also help if you have any questions for the meeting to submit them in advance. We will still take questions from the floor, but it will be helpful, especially under the restrictions, to have them in advance.

Finally, we have been having some sound problems recently in the service. My apologies – I had assumed that the red light meant it was on, not that the batteries had run low! Hopefully it will have improved now. Do let me know.



Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark