

18th November 2020

Dear all



Eco-church things have been a particular focus in my mind over the last couple of days. Yesterday I had an unexpected parcel arrive, and, upon opening, discovered the plaque we had been given for our Bronze Award. We just need to find a good place to put it.

One of the projects that we are considering is 'Wilding' some of the churchyard. This seemed like a good eco-friendly idea to the PCC... until we realised that 'wilding' means, well, 'wild'! i.e. you don't touch the area, and what grows will grow (including nettles, brambles etc.!). We swiftly realised that what we had been envisaging was 'Spring Meadowing', which means that flowers are planted which bloom in the spring. The grass is therefore not cut until May or even June (depending on the plants). This is not so eco-friendly as 'wilding', but much better to look at! St Guthlac's at Market Deeping does this, if you want to see how it looks.

Our plan is to have a trial with the small area right up by the side of the hall and hall/vicarage garden. There would be a small strip cut so as not to overgrow the paths. It will, inevitably, look a bit scruffy, especially for the first year – but the recommendation is that it is left for at least 2 years to settle, and see what it is like. If it proves popular, then we may consider the whole churchyard, with the exception of the area round the cremation burials by the wall. We would appreciate your comments, and also any expertise that can be offered about planting for a Spring Meadow.

We are also investigating the possibility of 'wilding' the small area to the north, behind the church – leaving a strip to access the church for maintenance.

Today I received an email from the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC). Arthur Rank was the British film maker, who is widely recognised for the big gong being struck at the beginning of his films. Rank was a committed Christian, with a particular interest in rural issues. His estate funds the ARC, which supports rural ministry in a variety of ways.

The email was reflecting on the fact that *There's no doubt that 2020 has been a year full of surprises! For me, one of the most recent has been the extent to which my garden has continued to flourish and provide colour well into November. Yes, there's absolutely a case to be made that that's a direct result of climate change, which is a less than positive development, but at a time when looking for glimmers of light and hope becomes a much more intentional activity, I'm enjoying being able to look out of my kitchen window at a garden still full of colour.*



I was just reflecting on this earlier. This is a rose that has just bloomed, the photo taken earlier today. I can't remember this happening before in November (correct me if I'm wrong). Unfortunately, I am also sure that the weeds have never before kept proliferating this late!

The writer continued by reflecting that gardening in autumn and winter is an inherently hopeful activity – you are working usually towards spring and summer, rather than the present (a sermon illustration here, perhaps!). As such, it gets us looking beyond the immediate, to a definite future. The cold and darkness of winter will pass. Light and colour will return to our lives.

She also reflected on the other positive benefits of gardening. It gives us some exercise. It gets us out of the house, and into the open air. In addition to these other benefits, the sunlight, even in winter, produces vitamin D, which is good for our body, not least against COVID. And it provides the psychological benefit of knowing that we have been productive. A win-win situation.

Nick Fawcett continues to produce his daily posts, despite his health problems. Today's looks at the parable of the waiting servants, the 10 maidens, or, as it has been known historically, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. He reflects on the experience of one of the disciples who, as a Jew having waited for centuries for the coming of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God, is now told that He will be going, and so will have another period of waiting. This is the prayer that concludes the meditation:

Lord Jesus Christ, we find it hard sometimes to hold on to our faith in your kingdom, to keep believing that the day will dawn when we shall see justice established, peace among the nations, an end to sorrow and good finally triumphant over evil. When we look at our world today we see no sign of that happening, no suggestion even that anything is any different from when you walked on our earth long ago, and we cannot help but wonder why you delay. We are bemused by questions, plagued by doubts, and, the more time passes, the more difficult it becomes to keep the edge on our belief.

Teach us to remember the fact that you did come, that, after all those years of waiting, you took on our flesh and endured our death, so that we might rise with you to new and everlasting life.

Teach us to remember your promise that, as you came, so you shall come again.

Teach us to go on trusting you, despite all that may seem to deny your purpose, confident that the day will come when wrongs are righted, hope is vindicated and love is triumphant over all, to the glory of your name.

Amen.



Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark