

Dear Friends

In January of this year I was asked to lead Worship in St Ives, on what would be Harvest Festival. The Sunday would be exactly the same date as the 40th Anniversary of the reopening and re-dedication of our beautiful Church building. Other writings and endeavors have been underway and will be available to mark that special Anniversary.



Here is just a short meditation to reflect briefly on both harvest and the re-dedication, and in the shadow of a pandemic; national and international political upheaval; the increase in economic inequality and injustice and all within a burning, and melting and flooding world. David Attenborough's television programme 'Extinction' should not leave any doubters.



Some verses from Baruch Chapter 5

- (1) ... take of your dress of sorrow and distress, put on the beauty of the glory of God forever, wrap the cloak of integrity of God around you.*
- (4&5) Peace through integrity, and honor through devotedness
Arise Stand on the heights and turn your eyes to the east*
- (8&9) And the forests, and every fragrant tree will provide shade.
For God will guide In joy by the light of his glory
With his mercy and integrity for escort.*



So many of us are dressed in sorrow and distress, and are desperate for shade, and mercy and peace. So many of us, known to us or not - are mourning, heartbroken and still trying to carry on. So very many have died.

The opening words of Baruch cite integrity. I have chosen it especially because integrity is like PPE, Test and Trace, in very short supply along with honor.

There is still beauty, skill and devotedness. We see that in the unstinting humanity and compassion given to the point of exhaustion - given to the point of total self-sacrifice in the loss of lives of so many giving their essential services to the vulnerable, frail and ill, or to help others get to their essential work.

Throughout the world we are surrounded by horrors. I feel emboldened to use the word horror in this context not least because of a quote from J. Neville

Ward in his book 'The Use of Praying'. He writes of the gains in living a life of faith within the prayer of the church. He suggests that Faith can introduce us to a dimension of life in which this worlds horror can be met creatively.

In the traditional harvest festival, we would bring our individual offerings; a sheaf of corn often seen - a special loaf wondrously designed; harvest suppers cheerful and glorious. Now - we would bring tins and packets for the food banks; ordinary food shopping will often include food for that offering - placed in supermarkets or churches.

It is though the harvest of ourselves in the context of the Christian which is important - and the creative response will stack up in the fields of need and where further seed must be planted in time for the next harvest.



Psalm 107 v 23 + 24, 29 + 30

- 23 'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters
24 These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep
29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still
30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.'



At harvest festival we remember those who risk their lives fishing, bringing food to our tables. We remember too those who take to the deep on their rafts, rowing boats, inflatables to seek a better life - who as well as storms may meet with hostility or compassion. Those who honor the naval code and those who seek to dishonor it. Those in terror seeking their desired haven, Lord have mercy.



We see creative responses being attempted in many places, in many lives, in many churches including our own. To restart what was there before, meeting needs. But maybe we have to explore too, as to what might be more needful, more radical, more risky, less comfortable, less safe maybe. Creative responses - we can all make them - internally hidden; externally visible; maybe unorthodox but always ethical - the two are not mutually exclusive;

nonviolent, beautiful, subversive, challenging. All can be laced with humor, and with unwavering - (well - maybe sometimes wobbly) a trust in that which notes the sparrow's fall.



For some reason, the harvest hymn 'Bringing in the sheaves' has been running through my head. I don't think I have ever sung it. I turned to U Tube and heard it sung in every variety possibly known to musicians.

I am risking the inclusion of it here sung by Tennessee Ernie Ford - three verses only. The first verse includes the line 'sowing acts of kindness'. It is quite jolly, and I hope it will make you smile. Of course, this is not possible without the video and I am sorry.



Psalm 127 verses 1 & 2

*'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it
Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.*



The 27th September is the Fortieth Anniversary of the re -dedication and reopening of our church building. The church as a whole in its history has had a few hundred harvests and in its present form forty.

The dedication and reopening itself was a harvest - the fruit of the seeds of imagination, thought, creativity, much hard work, skill and commitment on the part of many. Indeed - a creative response. Some good years, some lean, some joyful, some sorrowful. Church histories have been written - archives kept. The life and work of the church has continued over the years serving the community. Prayers have continued daily in our chapel over that time - 'the voice of prayer is never silent' and 'prayer is not sentiment but consecrated will power'. Perhaps this explains why, it can be so hard sometimes. It is though surely, the hearts core of Christian living.



*I will conclude with words I wrote once before at another time,
about another church.*

The Fortieth Anniversary but not an end.

“There is not an end. The church continues. it is a gathering of people who are all so different in temperament, experience, in certain areas of Christian belief, but drawn together by a desire to seek and love God, who is revealed in the life of Jesus. A group of people so diverse yet with this shared core, holds enormous potential.

As we go forward then what now? Perhaps it can best be said thus, using the words of Bernard Thorogood, a former URC General secretary: ‘We are created to make it possible for every man and woman to see the love of God in Christ, and to make a mature response ... Christian mission will seek everywhere and endlessly to know Christ in ways that enable men and women to respond, to know him in our homes, and our pulpits, in our kindness, and our use of political power, in our dialogue with other faiths, and our opposition to injustice, in our living and our dying, in our bread and in our wine.

It means to know Christ also in the common struggle of humanity and in the gifts of human love, in good people of other faiths and in the search for truth.”

Amen.



A verse from R & S 558

*“Will you come and follow me, if I but call your name
Will you go where you don’t know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?”*



Our Prayers

*We bring before you, Lord, the troubles and dangers of peoples and nations:
The sighing of prisoners, the sorrows of the bereaved, the necessities of
strangers, the dependency of the weary, the failing powers of the aged,
Lord draw near to each, for the sake of Jesus Christ*

Augustine of Hippo (354-340)

*We pray for our world leaders and politicians. For those of us enraged – give us
the capacity for pity and humility as we pray so for them; We pray for
wisdom, for courage, for kindness, forgiveness – for them, for ourselves.*

F. Wupp 2020

We pray for all who are ill and those who care for them; for the unimaginable numbers of those who have died, and those whose hearts ache with grief and mourning. For each one who has died, some known to us and those dear mostly unknown we offer this prayer.

*'Go gently on your voyage, beloved.
Slip away with the ebb tide,
Rejoice in a new sunrise.*

*May the moon make a path across the sea for you,
The Son of God provide a welcome.
May the earth receive you, and the fire cleanse you
as you go with our undying love
into the presence of Loves completeness.*

Kate McIlhagga



*The Father of many resting places grant us rest
The Christ who stilled the storm grant us calm
The Spirit who fills all things grant us peace
God's light be our light
God's love be our love
Through Jesus Christ our Lord- Amen*

David Adam, The Open Gate



*Be the peace of the Spirit be ours this day, this night
Be the peace of the Son be ours this day, this night
Be the peace of the Father be ours this day, this night
The peace of all peace be mine this day this night.
Each morning, and each evening of my life.*

Amen.

Carmina Gadelica

Every Blessing to each and all.

With Love

Gerry