

Our Vicar Writes

A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

It is a good few years since I left school. I have returned to education several times and even been a teacher, and the rhythm of the school calendar has never left me, much like the rhythm of the church year. I remember as a child the excitement of new uniform, shoes, a tidy hair cut and a new pencil case. I would begin each September with the promise that this was the year that I would show everyone that I could do well – I am dyslexic, so the ability to impress teachers, in a 1980's, West Country school, where most teachers considered such learning difficulties as an excuse for laziness, was a tall order. However, each year I was determined to prove them wrong. I looked forward to the first day of school, to show off the effects of my growth spurt – believe me it did happen! Sadly, everyone else had grown more and were always far more equipped to impress - my excitement of a new school year was inevitably short lived.



If we were to put my story in Biblical terms, one could say that my aspirations were much like the seed that fell on rocky soil, in the parable of the sower. They never had much foundation and withered, quickly in the waning Summer sun, but in a recent reflection of this parable, I realized that my faith journey, much like my educational journey, has not been identical to the parable. Jesus' parabolic sower only gives each soil type one chance to produce a yield, but the rocky soil that I used to be, has been tilled and nutrients have been added. God has never given up on the little girl whose inspiration disappeared as fast as the warm weather in the Autumn term.

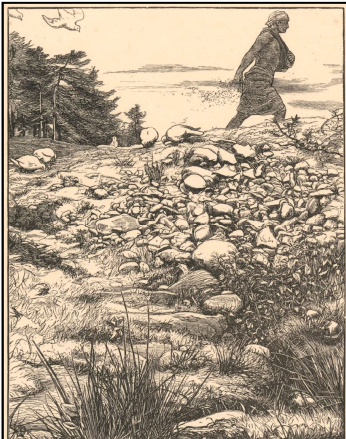
I know that I have responded to the good news of the Kingdom of God in every way that Jesus describes; I have heard and immediately forgotten because of some distraction, I have been burnt up and withered, I have had the voice of my faith and my enthusiasm choked by the demands of everyday life, and I have had times where I have gone out, proclaimed, taught, worshipped, attended to those in need, and cared for God's creation.

(continued overleaf)

Our Vicar Writes (continued)

But unlike the soils in this story, God has never stopped sowing seeds of the good news of the Kingdom upon me, however I have received it. God also knows that for seeds to flourish, it takes a true farmer to tend to them after sowing. God knows that roots go down at different times, that soils can be improved by adding to them. Faith needs to be continually fertilised. Sometimes rich soil needs to be mixed into the poorer soil in order to produce a soil that sustains a healthy crop. And this is what we need each other for; to help sustain each other's faith; to encourage; to pray with and for; to learn from each other and to teach; to mourn and commiserate with one another; to admit to one another when we are struggling and to reach out for help.

This September, we all begin a new term; a new life, post lockdown, praying that another spike will not force us back behind closed doors. We emerge from the strangest of Summers, shiny faced and ready for our new beginning, but let us not be cast down if we come across difficult soils, which choke our enthusiasm. If we are to flourish, we need God's help and we need only to ask. Jesus said "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We need to ask one another for prayer, it is as important as praying *for* someone else. God knows what each of us is struggling with and to God, nobody's pain is too small or insignificant. Everyone's prayers are heard and cared about and loved, even if it does not feel that way.



Parable of the Sower - by Millais.

So, in our time of new beginnings, I ask you to pray for one another, I ask for prayers as my sons and I settle in here, I ask you to know that I will be and have been praying for you and I ask you to know that God hears all our prayers and knows our dreams and hopes for the future and will be in all that comes from them.

Looking forward to meeting you face to face.

God bless,
Rev'd Cait Walker