

## My Beloved Fellow Adventurers (MBFA's)

Advent is the start of an adventure that we shape and we form. We also choose to either be part of a real adventure or just something familiar, in which case we are not Adventurers. It is a time for making choices. We determine how effective we will be, how adventurous we will be, how Kingdom true we will be and we determine how significant God will be in our adventure over the next twelve months. We will determine during Advent the extent to which our adventure will be for just for ourselves or for others too. Advent is an important time. During this time we are meant to be listening. During this time we are to suspend all our certainties and stand vulnerable before God. During this time we will receive our marching orders for the next year as well as our *rations* that will ensure that we are able to be effective in what we do over the next year. This is an important time and we have to be still or else we miss everything and become our usual convulsive selves – our Godless usual convulsive selves.

We have delved into Nehemiah this Advent. We have gone to places we never even imagined as we actually dealt with the text. We did not look for a clever mediator to convey Nehemiah's message. We allowed God to speak to us directly through the text of the Scriptures. It has been amazing. The insight and the depths that we have plumbed together has been awe inspiring. ["How great thou art" Thank you Lord.] But the goal was never just to gain a profound knowledge of Nehemiah just so that we could become cleverer. It was to be transformed by our engagement with the book of Nehemiah in the power of the Holy Spirit and that is when we are transfigured or resurrected – transformed.

We are on a journey Beloved and may I say again: if you long for church as it was when you first met God or God's community of faith, then you are actually stuck in an unhelpful place. If you are longing to recreate the church of your past then you are not being faithful to the journey. So everything we do we do in order to facilitate that journey. And journeys are mostly challenging and uncomfortable and they make your feet ache, in fact they make your whole body ache. But journeys extend you beyond what you believed was possible for yourself; you don't know what you are capable of until you hit the road. Bridgette has a T-Shirt that reads "Pain is weakness leaving the body". So I know that I keep taking you along these tortuous paths. I keep showing you the reality of our community – that which causes agony and ecstasy – so that we can feel the pain as we walk out of the agony and are strengthened. That is my intention. Keep on moving. Keep facing and confronting reality. Keep focussing on the imminent ecstasy. And if you believe what I have just said is a load of bollocks then go and read Abraham's story and consider the consequences of his faithfulness in undertaking this "foolish journey" into the unknown because God said he should.

I believe the foolish journey we must undertake is the journey of reconciliation. Please don't tell me it is not an issue and find clever justifications for not confronting it. It is an issue even now and our anger as a nation is too close to the surface for us to ignore. The church is who God has called and who God has equipped to do this. (Let me assure that I am now angry at our tardiness in embracing each other as human beings and that I won't stop until we do what we must do) I urge you therefore mark the 16<sup>th</sup> of December this year as the genesis point of this painful foolish journey of our being reconciled as a nation that will eventually become a light to the nations. We have delved into Nehemiah. We have come to understand that we are on a journey that often does not make sense. We have seen that in matters spiritual we are on the move and we operate from a place of

vulnerability. We have also seen that in matters spiritual the past provides no answers because the best is yet to come. And then there is the Baby and what to do about that. So let us with all those provisos go into a year (at least) of reconciliation beginning in 9 days time – 365 days of reconciliation. Let's do it without looking for help in history because there is none. Let's do it in faith as the community of faith and let's do it fearfully yet courageously together and let's begin here at All Saints so we may inspire the nation.

In all this it is however important to remember that in Christ we are not without energy and a plan to get to the place of victory and to get beyond the pain so that weakness may leave the body. So the expectations heaped upon us are enormous but so too is the fruit. Kippy reminded me the other day about the parish prayer - that we were to pray the Parish Prayer until Advent. I looked back over these last six months and suddenly realised and revisited all that has happened over these last six months. It has been incredible. God is good all the time; all the time God is good. It is indeed true that one should be careful what you ask for because you might just get it and boy have we gotten it!

I want to thank you all for a wonderful year of growth and development in all spheres. I know that we have not been far from pain and now we are all exhausted. But it feels good nonetheless. I think it is fair to say that we are a community poised on the brink of something grand; something that will blow us away and convince us that "our God reigns" I want to wish you all happy – in the deepest sense of that word – holidays, peace and love and also a reconciliatory heart and disposition. May the Baby do it for you this time and may there be peace on earth and may we all be a part of that making and being and keeping that peace.

My family are also so grateful to you all for the loving support you gave our son and his production. It was a glorious success even though it made a loss. Michael has found himself again and has been astounded at what he could do so there will be many more. God be praised. He has been on a journey and so have we all and we have been praying without ceasing and there is the fruit and the Baby. Enjoy. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Take care of you and yours and the Baby

Love you Biiig

Michael