

## **A letter from Rev Jacqueline**

We had some lovely local and parochial festivities last month as we joined the nation in honouring Queen Elizabeth through the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Soirees, festive picnics, fireworks and flaming beacons ran alongside our Jubilee Messy Church and Jubilee church service and, during the same weekend, the red, white and blue bunting of Jubilee hung alongside the red, orange and yellow ribbons of the flames of fire of Pentecost. It showed just how church and community run alongside each other – not an ‘either/or’, but rather a ‘together with...’ We are ‘all in it’ together...

In the life of the Church, we are now in a time known as ‘Ordinary Time’, but in this time where young people are taking exams and thinking about moving on to new schools, colleges and universities, where we are all picking up the threads of ‘normal life’ alongside a Covid-19 that refuses to leave us, where we are also facing a time of increasing financial challenges, instability in world economics, peace and security – we can see that during this season of Ordinary Time, times are anything but ordinary.. And we are also discovering that ordinary time isn’t one endless celebration – rather, it is mixed with sorrow and grief, poorly people and dying or departed loved ones – with trials and tribulations of making ends meet – and quite frankly, the calm of ‘peace-time’ daily living is very often hijacked by those unexpected circumstances that leave us reeling with bewilderment, desolation, sadness and fear for the future...

And it is here, in the highs and lows of life that the extraordinary hope, comfort and strength of the Christian faith steps in as we look to the words of Jesus for meaning and encouragement, very often when all else simply doesn’t seem to meet that need or give comfort and hope or purpose.

*‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places ... and if I go and prepare a place to you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.’* (John 14:1-4)

These words speak poignantly to me today – as I reflect on the fragility of life through the loss of dear ones such as Roger, Bob P, and for me also the recent loss of my Father – in that they are saying that while Jesus isn’t with us on the ground, he will come and take us to him in that dwelling place of God’s peace in heaven, through the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of love that connects our earthly human hearts and lives with Jesus and with all those heavenly lives of loved ones who have gone before us and who are with him now in that place that he has prepared. And if that isn’t hopeful enough, it is this Spirit of love that will also connect our earthly human struggles and dilemmas and confusion with the heavenly presence of God’s calm and peace and comfort that does indeed help us to find that much-needed

‘strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow’ as we journey on the best we can.

And so, as we move on into the summer break, the time where we seek rest and replenishment – and some sunshine we hope – I pray that your ordinary time will become extraordinary in the sharing and caring that we offer to one another – the nice things we get to do together – the free-time that you get with friends and family – and the hope and encouragement that you might find in dipping into the words and wisdom of a faith that promises not a life of extraordinary perpetual calm seas and plain-sailing, but rather a life-line and anchor to hold you fast as you seek to cling on to some peace and calm through the ordinary ups and downs of the choppy seas of life....

*‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid...’* (John 14:27)