

Letter from Rev Jacqueline



Dear friends,

New year greetings and blessings – I hope this year brings goodness for you and strength to deal with those not so good things that might come along the way.

As I write on a cold January morn, one of the most hopeful signs of a winter-into-spring season is the sight of snowdrops growing – that most delicate of flower being able to withstand the hardest of weather conditions. Gentle and fragile appearances sometimes mask a tougher and bolder interior, however, – a ‘strength and stay’ that helps with the resilience needed in tough times.

You might have your own ‘strength and stay’ to help and encourage you along – a loved one; a friend; a four-legged friend; some words of encouragement in a book or from a quote; a community group – I wonder, who or what might it be for you?

For Christians, Jesus is our strength and stay – to quote words from the popular hymn ‘strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow’... We have come through the seasons of the church calendar that set the rhythm of the year for Christian spirituality and which are often grouped together as ‘Christmas’. We have experienced the watching and waiting of Advent – the coming of Emmanuel (God with us) through the birth of Jesus – the revelation of the divine light proclaiming love and peace coming into the world affirmed through the visiting of the Magi at Epiphany – and as we continue through to Candlemas on 2nd February (celebrated on Sunday 28th January at St Peter’s) when Jesus is presented at the temple to the joy and delight of Simeon and Anna who have waited all their lives for the fulfilment of the promise of God to send a King and saviour who will be a catalyst for the promise of peace and justice in a troubling world – we are invited to think about the light of the world entering our own lives and story – and how that might be our own individual ‘strength and stay’ on the changing seasons of life.

We pause to think about how this spiritual journey becomes our own spiritual journey in our own rhythm of life – and how the birth and revelation of Jesus – the light and hope of the world – might stir up our own revelations of a deeper meaning to the life we live out on the ground – as its spirit ignites a light in our own lives that can show us the way...

From this time of Candlemas, we then prepare for the Lenten journey ahead that begins on Ash Wednesday – this year 14th February - that will lead us to experience the Good Friday sorrow of dying – the lament of low-Saturday of mourning that – in the Christian tradition – gives way to the the breaking through of the resurrection joy and hope of the new life and new beginnings and promises of Easter that comes as Jesus is raised from the dead and shows us what ‘rising to new life’ – spiritually and physically – can really look like.

We are invited to join in with the celebration of a springtime experience celebrated in heaven, on earth, in nature, in life in its fullness – everywhere and for everyone – wow, what a journey!

So as we return to our dear little snowdrops blooming for us on a cold January morn, we can look at them and know that despite the darkness and desperately heartbreaking conflict, injustice, cruelty and inequality that we are faced with every day in the world around us – we can welcome moments of metaphor and imagery where we are helped to look beyond the fragility and futility of what we can see – to the hope and promise of light and love to come – in the end – when the strength and stay for world peace and order will become known by all and for all – in the light and love that is promised in faith to all who truly turn to the light for it to light – not only for their own lives but so that we can also be a light for those lives still living in the dark places of life and in the world.....

... it all begins with a snowdrop – and with us....

May this time of Lent bring for you signs of encouragement to keep going and to keep growing as you are led on into the dazzling light of new-life Easter-hope that can help you to make sense and purpose of life a day at a time, one step at a time, through springtime's hopeful spirit and promise - all in your own way and in your own time –

NB: If exploring the Christian spirituality of life might be a pathway you are considering, please do come along to a St Peter's church service where we will always offer to you a warm welcome, hospitality and friendship – the heart of the Gospel that we proclaim,,,

Blessings and love, Jacqueline



I lift my eyes to the quiet hills
in the press of a busy day;
as green hills stand in a dusty land
so God is my strength and stay.

I lift my eyes to the quiet hills
to a calm that is mine to share;
secure and still in the Father's will
and kept by the Father's care.

I lift my eyes to the quiet hills
with a prayer as I turn to sleep;
by day, by night, through the dark and light
my Shepherd will guard his sheep.

I lift my eyes to the quiet hills

and my heart to the Father's throne;
in all my ways to the end of days
the Lord will preserve his own.

Timothy Dudley-Smith