

Dear Friends

'Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer...' I wonder if we will!

This morning as I sat down to write this letter to you, we had to put the heating back on, just for an hour, to take off the chill. But isn't it supposed to be summer? There is something awry with the climate for sure! Switching on the radio or television it seems to be a wall-to-wall general election commentary on a loop, followed by vapid speculation. By the time you read this, your hand may indeed be hovering over the ballot paper, influencing the direction of travel not just for the hazy days of summer, but for the next 5 years. Issues around the economy, healthcare, social care, migration, housing, defence, the environment etc etc. *Lord have Mercy.*

The world is changing faster than we ever imagined. The wars continue to rage on, (see the prayer points for this month where I have shared some prayers for the war in Gaza). The war between Russia and the Ukraine began in February 2022. The civil war in the Sudan began in April 2023. There are skirmishes and uprisings around the world on a frighteningly regular basis. The war in the Ukraine presents itself as bullying land grabbing, but its roots go back deeper than that behind the iron-curtain. The war in Gaza resonates deeply with us all because ultimately whether we like it or not, it is a religious war, founded on different understandings of Gods provision for his people, and so it is so complicated and goes way back in time to maybe Old Testament days? The war in the Sudan is so far from our understanding that it doesn't even make it onto our news bulletins. For more than a year the Sudanese army has been fighting the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, and has killed thousands and forced millions from their homes. Ethnic cleansing and horrendous war crimes are being committed and yet so little is being reported and so little diplomatic support being offered. Our Bishop Toby has just returned from a fact-finding and prayer affirming visit to our diocesan link area. *Christ have Mercy.*

Here at St Johns, we are on the brink of a new era, as we pray and prepare to welcome Revd Joanna Glenwright and her family. Our prayers will be for Jo and Rob as they pack up and move home, and as they look towards becoming part of our family here. But also our prayers should be for us as we prepare our hearts and minds to welcoming them as a church family, ensuring that we are ready to work with Jo for the continued growth of our church, for the development of the community and for the sake of the Gospel message. As we prepare ourselves, we pray *Lord have Mercy.*

So the lazy, hazy, crazy days become a season for reflection. Maybe we have a little more time to pause, to reflect, to pray. As we pray for mercy, it reminds me of the little fish who in panic asks her mother 'mum what's water? I've got to find water, or I'll die!' But actually we live immersed, surrounded in this water, (God's mercy). The reason we don't always acknowledge it is that it feels so far away. But it is in fact so close, more intimate to us than we know. We are surrounded by the ever-loving mercy of God who calls us daily to immerse ourselves in his love and align ourselves to his will. So our prayer is, *'may Gods spirit guide us in all that we do this summer and for ever. Amen'*.

God Bless

Andrew