

## Dear Friends

I am writing the article just after our APCM (Annual Parochial Church Meeting) for the year 2024. It probably was a bit long! Sorry! And well done for those who came and endured. But in some ways, I am not too apologetic for the length.

The year 2024 gave us much to reflect on and give thanks for – imagine if we had nothing to share and no-one to say thank you to?!

It is important to take stock once a year, to be reflective and to take a moment to say yes that happened and yes, we did that, and yes God met us there.

It is too easy to always be looking ahead, and I can be very guilty of quickly moving on to the next problem to solve, the next thing on my to do list!

Remembering and reflecting is an important spiritual discipline. The Bible calls us time and time again to remember. Whether that is Jesus at the last supper, St Paul speaking to the churches, Moses reminding the Israelites or the Prophets calling the exiled to recall past deliverance.

This time last year you didn't know if anyone would even apply for the post of vicar, would God call anyone to St John's? Would he be faithful to this place and send someone to join in and lead?

Would St John's cope during interregnum, would you remain faithful, or turn away?

This time last year I did not know where God would call me next and what that would look like for my family and I.

Morning Prayer has been taking us through the early chapters of Deuteronomy - where the Israelites having been in the wilderness, are on the cusp of going into the Promised Land. I am struck by God's Word through Moses in Deuteronomy 6:10-12 : *When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant— then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

That scripture has always really challenged me. My heart hears God's discipline. I know how I can become complacent in times of plenty. And maybe that is a particular challenge for us here in Menston, where our material blessings may seemingly numb our vulnerability and sense of dependence. But God does not call us to an anxious state, or to fearful obedience. Rather he calls us to remember his faithfulness and his love, to lean into it and respond to it, in times of plenty, and in times of need.

Remembering how faithful God has been to us, and how we have responded to that is good

spiritual discipline. It keeps us focussed on the source of all good things, and will enable us to quickly recall his past victories when we face the next trial of life.

God is good.

He was faithful to us in 2024, and he will be faithful to us again in the year ahead.

Let us look to Him and listen.

May sunshine and blessings be yours this month,

*Jo*