

Facebook Thoughts for the Day – September 2020

2nd September – Aileen Fox

Out of my comfort zone, being different, the 'new normal'. These are expressions I have used myself many times in the last few months. After 6 months I was able to meet up with my daughter. A long weekend and of course a visit to the sea at some stage. For us as a family Cromer has a special place, family holidays, many happy memories and of course the Foxes were a local family way back. Yes we made it in the rain a little damp but had done all we usually do, walked down the pier, walked on the beach and had fish and chips.

We both share an interest in textiles and the lure of 2 fabric shops in Hunstanton was too much to resist. However, the weather was expected to be rough, heavy rain and possibly thunder. The decision to go to Old Hunstanton first was made. In nearly 30 years of living in Norfolk there have been few visits to Old Hunstanton.

We arrived in beautiful sunshine and blue skies. We stopped for coffee at a cafe on the beach, well sorted for distancing. Then we started to walk towards Hunstanton itself. It was wonderful and we decided in view of the weather to forgo the fabric shops and enjoy the beach, the space and the scenery. It was different, not the sandy cliffs of Cromer, nor the pier or cafes, but space, beauty and warmth. Not our usual seaside visit but an enjoyable one.

My daughter had managed a special birthday weekend in January with friends staying in a cottage in Old Hunstanton, it had spoken to her as a place that was special but not as familiar. It is now firmly fixed in my places to go and explore. Sometimes we get caught up in the familiar, it's too easy to always go and do the same things. If anything lockdown and being unable to attend Church physically has hopefully pointed us to different ways of worshipping. The worship sheets, zoom, video and telephone services have all played their part and hopefully will still do as we physically open our chapel doors. It will be good to see one another, though being mindful that we must wear masks, not sing, socially distance and not serve refreshments. It is going to take creativity, thinking outside the box (another well used phrase), not always looking back but seeking ways to continue being the body of Christ as a church community. Easy to say but more challenging. Yet if we look at the disciples, they were ordinary people doing ordinary things until they met Jesus, then life was turned upside down. Are we ready for the 'new normal'?



3rd September 2020 – Sam Parfitt

Before I came to work for the church, I worked in a children's nursery. It was a wonderful role to have and it was a privilege to work with such enquiring minds, often the children's questions gave me much to think

about. I remember one afternoon a child had fallen over, so I picked him up and he was unharmed but needed a reassuring cuddle. Once he had settled, he gazed at the cross I was wearing around my neck, pointed to it and said 'look - plane'. Now at the tender age of three I knew that this wasn't the moment to talk about dying on crosses, so I simply replied 'it's a very special plane and it can take you to very special places' to which he said 'cool', then ran off happily to play. I have often thought about that moment and whether I said the right thing, but I think he had a point, if the cross is like a plane, we are the passengers and Jesus the pilot. In following Jesus, we are saved and released from sin and journey to a place where we recognise that we are loved by God and can share that love with others. Sometimes when I look at the cross I still think of that little boy and his 'cool plane' and I smile! (so, if you see me smiling at a

cross now you know what I'm thinking about!)



7th September – Rev Barbara Winner

A tradition has grown up whereby my granddaughter Eve and I take each other sunflowers when we can. We both enjoy growing them as well, although Eve's are always much bigger and sunnier than mine! The picture shows one of her seed heads. I looked at it in awe and wondered how many seeds were held in it. It seemed a miracle that so many could come from just one seed! How many would result if all these grew? Well none unless they are sown and nourished. 'The flowers of tomorrow are in the seeds of today' – and we have our part to play in helping them grow – in making the miracle!



8th September – Aileen Fox



During this rather strange year we have benefitted from beautiful weather and the opportunity to be outside. Many have taken up gardening and enjoyed walking in the fresh air. Yet despite it being too hot at times, we are now feeling the cooler weather a chill in the air in the morning and several cold evenings. Summer is almost over and we start to see autumn encroaching. I write as someone with a reasonably large garden, able to sit outside and enjoy the wildlife (except when they eat my plants). Enjoying nature, the variety of birds, the fledglings still hanging around the parents, the squirrel digging holes in the lawn to find its hidden hazelnuts. I feel for those who have not had these opportunities, stuck inside small spaces, worried about future work, wondering how they will cope. The sunflower picture below I posted on social media (it's from the walled garden at Felbrigg NT) and it got a lot of interest from friends. It's not the conventional sunflower, it's a different variety and if left should supply seeds for the birds and gardener. It's provided for the bees and others insects and been a cheerful flower to greet visitors. It certainly caught my attention but also forced me to think about coming months, that these plants will die and all we will have is the seed and the memories. What of each one of us, will we have happy memories of the spring and summer that was different? Or will it be sadness at the loss of loved ones? Of isolation, limited contact with family and friends? This is surely a time of preparation of looking forward and being aware of how life may be different. It's also a time to remember and think of how to support vulnerable friends and acquaintances during the cooler months when we are perhaps inside more. Remembering how cut off some may feel, especially if they have no family around.

When Jesus returned to heaven he blessed the disciples, and he promised them power from on high. (Luke 24 v49-50). Physical and Spiritual. We are also tasked with spreading the good news both by actions and words. As we reflect on the last 6 months are we preparing for the future for others as well as ourselves? Are we praying and encouraging or are we closing the door and battening down the hatches? Just like the summer and the memories we have had, we now need to prepare and continue to walk our pilgrim journey whether in person, through the internet, by letter or telephone, but not looking back with regret but pressing on to whatever the Lord requires of us.

10th September – Sam Parfitt

I candidated for ministry in the last Connexional year and was rejected, however I was blessed with many good things which happened during that process. One of the most significant was reconnecting with the Church which I was baptised in. As I needed a copy of my baptismal record, I had cause to speak to the churchwarden, who remembered me from the time she ran the local Christian youth club, some 30 years ago! I travelled to meet her at the church, where they run a cafe every Tuesday morning which serves as a meeting point for the local community. It was wonderful to meet her again, and she had told another lady who used to help her run the children's group that I had been in touch. Mrs Jill is now quite elderly, but during the time they ran the group one of the things that kept them going was the hope that just one child would come to faith. It occurs to me now that we never know the seeds we are sowing, Jesus told us the best way to plant them in the parable of the sower, but it might be a long time until we see the plant grow! As a Pioneer, my calling is to work on the edges of church and I am certain I shall never see the result of some of the seeds I have sown, but I think of Mrs Jill and the ladies of St Clements, Outwell, who sowed and waited patiently in faith.



11th September – Rev Liz Jolly

The evening was already dark, when a strange sound was heard coming from the field where the lambs were resting.

Taking a torch to investigate, the owners of the field found the reason for the sound and the commotion. A baby muntjac had got into the field and was being chased by a fox. It was naturally frightened and alarmed and calling for its mother, who could not get into the field to come to its defence because the mother was too big for the gaps in the fencing.

But, the lambs who were now well grown and whose mothers had moved to another field, were protecting the baby muntjac from the fox.



Whether the baby muntjac had had the sense to hide itself amongst these large woolly creatures, or whether the lambs were banding together to consciously protect the defenceless baby deer, we will never know. Only the animals themselves know the reason for their actions. Once the fox had been driven off by the human, the baby returned through the undergrowth to the safety of its mother. The spiritual or moral conclusion that you draw from this true story depends on you.

14th September – Dee Moden

It was a big decision to move into Norfolk, one we had been thinking about for quite some time. We had a lovely house good neighbours and a very busy fulfilling active church life, with lots of friends both inside and outside of church. But we suddenly felt that now the time had come to be nearer our family, it felt very much that we had been led by the way things seemed to happen quickly. It has certainly been challenging through 'Lockdown' and other problems which came with it, and there were a few! All through this time, however difficult things were, we knew we were not alone.

This was sharply brought into focus when our 6 year old grandson was looking at our front door, which I wasn't really that keen of, and said 'Look Grandma at all those stars they are the stars of Jesus.' I hadn't looked at it like that until then, now I love it as it twinkles and sparkles in the sunshine and light giving me comfort as I think about his words.

The star was a sign of the coming of Christ into the world, the greatest gift of all. Jesus came to give light to the world - a new covenant giving hope for all those who believe in his name. Isaiah 11 v 6a "A little child shall lead them"



15th September – Rev Jacqui Horton

The David Attenborough programme 'Extinction' on Sunday evening was pretty hard-hitting and challenging and - once again - brought home the enormity of what is happening to our wildlife, climate and planet.

Watch it on catch-up if you missed it! It is one of those 'must see' programmes for our times. It is very easy to feel helpless and hopeless and to wonder how 'they' will ever sort things out. But then I remember that 'they' is all of us and I am challenged -again - to think about what I myself can do. There were plenty of suggestions and hints on the programme, Jen and I have resolved - again - to look at our food consumption, our acquisition of 'stuff' and our lifestyle generally.

16th September – Sam Parfitt

Gift Giving



One of the best things about Deefa dog, my 13-year-old Labrador Retriever, is the welcome she gives me when I return home. There is lots of tail wagging and invariably she will bring me a 'gift', quite often it will be her parsnip, which is her favourite toy (sometimes it is a sock she has 'liberated' from the linen basket!). From a behavioural point of view there are a few reasons for this; I am her Alpha; her breed genetically predisposes her to this charitable gift-giving and my response of strokes and cuddles reinforces her behaviour. But the greater gift she brings every time I come home is far more precious than her favourite parsnip, as she gives both the gift of joy and the gift of love. Throughout scripture there are many accounts of all sorts of gift giving, from the Widow's gift in Luke 21:1-4, the loaves and fishes in Matthew 14:14-21 to the gifts of time, resource and skill given by the Good Samaritan on the road in Luke 10:25-37. All of these gifts were practical and helpful things given to others, but the true gift was really much more than money, fish and first aid, the true gift was love, demonstrated to us across the whole of Jesus' Ministry, and it's a gift we share today, 2000 years on.

17th September – Judith Semmons

I was only reflecting that I hadn't been inspired for a while to share 'a thought' when a request came through with one of the church newsletters. Along with the same email was a selection of photos from the virtual gardens event : There is an impressive selection- some amazing displays and others less ambitious but still attractive in their own way.

I had previously taken some photos of our own garden but didn't think they were worth sending in. I now I realise I should have done: not because they're anything special but because they were my offering...however fancy; however simple. ...as seen in the photo below. So I'm reminded of hymn 204 from Singing the Faith.

'What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise man I would do my part. Yet what I can I give him. Give my heart.' Whatever we have to offer - a small or large gesture to one another; or to God - it's worth it: That brief phone call to check if someone is ok, a friendly note through the door, 5 minutes quiet time with God may be all that's needed.

This weekend we're travelling across to Leicestershire to visit my aunt who has dementia and lives in a nursing home. It is possible that we will only be able to see her in the reception area and at a distance. It is highly likely that 5 minutes after our visit she will have forgotten that we came. But that moment of pleasure in her face will be worth it.



19th September – Rev Barbara Winner



Today on my walk I picked blackberries for my tea – delicious with yoghurt and stem ginger! As I became caught up in the brambles I recalled doing battle with them in the Watton Manse garden! When we arrived there we found a large wilderness of a garden which had been uncared for over several years. At times it was an adventure – we found among other things a hidden secret path, a tumble down shed full of recyclables and a rats nest! But the bane of our lives in trying to tame the undergrowth were the brambles (we had a name for them- not to be repeated here!). They seemed to grow faster than we could chop them down! And yet – today, here I am contemplating my tea and being thankful for the brambles I found in the hedgerows today and for their fruit. Perhaps we should have been kinder to them after all!

21st September – Aileen Fox

I was fortunate recently to have a friend staying and enjoy a staycation. Both on our own we took the opportunity to explore locally. Observing social distancing, pre-booking everything and accepting the necessary restrictions. One such visit was to the Blickling estate. A National Trust House I have visited many times, but this was different. New entrances, different routes including the walk around the lake which I have to admit that I had never done. As we rounded the bend we saw the house. My imagination went to my favourite children's book, *Wind in the Willows*. Oh it's like Toad's house! I was given a wry smile of amusement, but to me it was! I love that book, identifying with the Mole who in the opening chapters is painting and suddenly shouts out 'hang spring cleaning'. Anyone who knows me will realise I struggle to keep things tidy, or spring clean, and I start enthusiastically and then like the mole get bored and down tools. I try to be like Ratty and make the best of everything but sometimes it doesn't work. Then Badger I admire his advice but I don't always deliberate and think before acting, which brings me to Toad. Oh he is boastful, generous to a fault and looking for the next new idea and he doesn't get it right. But when the chips are down the friends band together to defeat the enemy and restore Toad to his home.

There is a parallel there with our own situation during lockdown and beyond. We know who was there for us, who kept in touch and within the central Norfolk circuit so many responded in different and effective ways.

I am reminded of Peter the disciple who was impetuous, recognised Jesus as the Messiah, betrayed him, yet was the rock on whom Jesus used to build the Church. And together the disciples all ordinary people who came together and played their part in spreading the good news of Jesus. Are we trying to use all opportunities possible to spread the Good News?



23rd September – Sam Parfitt



This week I've been thinking about music and how important it is to us. Many of us will enjoy a broad range of music, myself included. You are just as likely to find me listening to Debussy as you are Deep Purple. However, as a 19-year-old teenager full of hurt and pain I most found solace in Heavy Metal music, it expressed how I was feeling when I couldn't find the words myself. One of my favourites was Iron Maiden, I spent hours listening to them. Fast forward 21 years, and I still like listening to Maiden, in fact, I was listening to them lately whilst driving from Blakeney to Walsingham, singing away, when I suddenly realized that I was singing about praying!! All those years

listening to this song, and many others by Iron Maiden, I had never realised there was some Christian content, right under my nose!! And I thought about how God reaches us even when we may seem lost to him, as there was I as a raging anti-establishment 19-year-old, who was trying to run from God, listening to songs involving prayer!! I often find looking back that God has always been there for me, and invariably has the last laugh !!

24th September – Judith Semmons



I think it would be reasonable to say that Facebook can be regarded like Marmite: you either love it or hate it. Some people seem to share their whole life story on it; others use it as a bit of fun and some, like myself, use it as an easy way to keep up with friends' and family activities. There is no doubt that technology has been invaluable during the Corona pandemic and the Central Norfolk Circuit have used Facebook to share these thoughts as well as communicating via other routes. And I have shared a few Facebook posts in some of my 'Thoughts for the day'. These two images popped up at very different times. The thanks to the NHS made me think that it could be God embracing the world, supporting people in the challenges currently being faced. The compass in the sand was created by a man, patiently drawing a large garden rake through the sand. It reminded me

of a God who can help us through the storms and is patient with us, whatever our situation: our frustration with the pandemic; our questioning of what is currently happening, possibly even berating God. There is no doubt that the pandemic is giving us many storms at the moment. These are ever changing due to the way the number of cases of the Corona virus is changing and how people react - for better or worse. And I reflected on the hymn: 'Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain, will your anchor drift or firm remain?' (Singing the Faith 645). How good is our anchor today?



25th September – Glyn Constantine

Each week at our Zoom Bible Study we have been looking at two of the lectionary readings for the following week. One of these was Ezekiel 18 v 1-4 & 25-32 (set for 27th September).

When Ezekiel is mentioned my heart sinks.... A long book which is quite obscure to most people apart from the famous 'valley of dry bones'. The reading however, even if not well known, struck a chord with us. Ezekiel was one of the first wave of Jews exiled to Babylon in 597BC. It was from there that he wrote his prophecy to those exiled and those remaining in Jerusalem. The first 24 chapters give the resounding message that Jerusalem will fall unless attitudes and behaviour change.

Those hearing the message however were saying It's not fair! It's not our fault! Why should we be punished for what our predecessors did? It's their fault we're in this mess not ours! (Lamentations 5 v 7) That's what the proverb alluded to in v2 and Jeremiah 31 v29 relates to, which must have been well known at the time. 'The parents eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'

Look around you from children to politicians; Isn't it typical of human nature. When things go wrong find someone else to blame.

Ezekiel uses three examples to show that God judges individuals for their actions not those of others. Instead of blaming past generations look at your own and your own lives is his message. You cannot rewrite the past but you can alter the present.

In our own age climate, the environment and ordinary standards of honesty and truthfulness are under threat from the top down. A society where passing the blame and lying is regarded as normal behaviour rather than owning up to one's own responsibilities and mistakes

What about our generation? Are we taking our responsibilities seriously? What legacy and example are we leaving for our children and grandchildren?

26th September – Deacon Jen Woodfin

During the last couple of weeks, I have seen the progress of some building work that I pass whenever I walk into Swaffham. It includes quite a steep brick drive, a wall by the side and some steps. Having completed the brick work I happened to walk past as two builders were talking about what to do about the steps. I heard one of them say “the owner wants to keep those two old steps as they show how old they are.” Later in the day I walked past and the steps were completed. They had managed to incorporate some of the old stones with new stones and the new wall by the side was in a colour that complimented them. It seemed to me they had kept the best of the old and used the best of the new.



As we are living in a time of so many changes we could learn from this example. In our own lives, and in our churches, we need to look at the old ways and consider what we truly value and find how we can keep them. We also need to look at times we are in now and find what new opportunities we can see and incorporate them too. As we find the right balance between old and new so we will see many blessings now, and into the future.

28th September - Aileen Fox



Harvest always brings back memories of my Grandfather and Uncle who ran a family business in Bedford. Howards Farm and Garden specialised in poultry food, seeds, seed potatoes, pet food and garden sundries, the forerunner to the garden centre. But the difference was that they visited farms, small holdings, individual customers around Bedford and district, collecting orders and delivering the previous one. As a small child I went out with them in the distinctive red lorry with sacks of corn etc piled on the back. Growing up within this environment I accompanied mum and watched and ‘helped’ with seed packing.

Not the colourful packets we have nowadays but green envelope type, where we had to print the name of the seed using an addressograph machine. Then add the price, and date stamp every packet. Then came the interesting part, filling the seeds packets, using measures as in the photo. Expensive seed meant a small measure, lighter and less expensive seed a big measure. Half pint, and pint measures (I don’t have these) for peas and beans. The smaller packets were stitched with a hand operated machine once filled; the larger bulkier envelopes lightly brushed with water allowed to become tacky then the flap closed. It was a paradise for me as a child, and the smell of a rotting potato takes me back to the stores and the huge sacks of spuds, but also brings back childhood memories and especially my grandad, we had a special relationship, I was the first grandchild and the only one who knew him. He loved the hymn *We plough the fields and scatter* (adding) Howard’s good seed on the land.

Seeds when given the right attention will flourish and grow strong. Jesus planted seeds in people, His disciples, people he met, people he preached to, people he healed, and who in turn passed on the seed *The Good News* to others. We who have been given the *Good News* can also plant seeds of love and hope to the people we meet. Sometimes the seed will be through words or actions, and often we will not know the outcome ‘the Harvest’ but we need to go on sowing. Just as when I mess up my vegetable sowing, by inadequate watering and feeding, when I put this right the results are fruitful. Are we sowing the love of Jesus to others?

30th September – Sam Parfitt

We returned to Sunday worship in our Church last week, which was lovely after so long away, and of course it was song-less! This aspect may be difficult for many of us who consider singing to be an important part of the way we worship God as people called Methodists. It brings to mind Psalm 137:4 'How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?' The Covid landscape certainly seems like a strange land which is foreign to us at times! You may be familiar with a song called The Rivers Of Babylon, it's a Rastafari song which focuses on most of the first seven verses of Psalm 137, it's a catchy tune and was first released by a group called the Melodians in 1970. Most of us will probably be more familiar with the Boney M version, released in 1978. Interestingly this song was banned under Saddam Hussien's Regime as it was thought to be promoting Zionism (Zionism is an ideology among some Jewish people that a Jewish state should be re-established in Israel) So sometimes we find ourselves in times and places where we cannot sing, but I am certain that God sees right into our hearts and knows the songs that we are singing there! As we come together in worship surely our heart songs will become a choir, praising God and loving one another.

