

Dear Friends

As you may have noticed from the registers section of this month's magazine, I have had the privilege of conducting quite a few weddings and Blessings in church recently. These are always really happy occasions and it's good to see so many of the couples' family and friends come along to join the celebrations and wish them well in their new life together. It probably won't come as a surprise however, to learn that although these guests are well known to the couple in question they rarely are to me. Having said that, there is always going to be the odd exception.

One such occasion took place a couple of weeks ago. The service had ended and everyone was leaving church when a lady wearing a lovely brightly coloured dress and sporting one of the biggest smiles I have ever seen came up to me and greeted me like a long lost friend – the problem was, although I knew that I recognised this lady, indeed I was confident that I knew her well, for a couple of seconds I struggled to work out exactly who she was. However, had she been looking rather more sombre and wearing a black suit at a far less happy occasion, I would have had no problem at all in recognising one of our local funeral directors.

Obviously there is no reason at all why this lady shouldn't have been there, nor is there any reason why she shouldn't have been properly dressed for this happy occasion, the issue was that I was seeing her completely out of context, which of course was my issue and not hers. Ultimately however, I was really pleased that I had seen this different side to her personality and been on the receiving end of one of the loveliest smiles I have ever seen.

Well, all this got me thinking. Although we expect to encounter God in some way or another when we come to church, are there ever any other times when we might be in his presence but fail to recognise this because, frankly, we don't expect to see him? It probably won't come as any surprise to learn that I believe that our God is in all places at all times. I believe that he is evident in the warmth of the sunshine, the cooling breeze and the refreshing and energising rain. I believe that he is evident in the wonderful countryside that surrounds us and the wildlife that we see along the way. I believe that we can see a glimpse of him in the actions of all those whom we love and care for, those who help or enhance our lives in any way and those who selflessly come to the aid of others in times of need or distress.

However, I believe that God is particularly evident at this time of year. For example, we should be able to appreciate something of his generous provision for us all in the bountiful harvest that is currently being gathered in, and as we become aware and give thanks for the farmers working tirelessly to bring in the harvest, we should also think about the way that God himself works tirelessly with his people to bring about a better world. Later in the month we celebrate All Souls, All Saints and Remembrance, times to remember those who have meant so much to us in the past, to give thanks for the love we share and to gain comfort with each other as we continue to mourn their loss— again, we should also be aware of the love that God has for us all and the great sacrifice he made and enabled others to make throughout history as a result of that love. But it's also a time to remember that because God came to earth in human form in the person of Jesus Christ, he is fully aware of all the emotions we feel, he knows exactly what it is to mourn the loss of a loved one and he is anxious to draw alongside and give comfort to anyone in that situation now. Then of course, we move on to Advent & Christmas – I probably don't need to say anything about that.

So, to sum up, I simply don't believe there is a single place or situation in which God is not present – all we need to do is expect to recognise him and I'm sure we will. We would love to help you do this

in any of our churches and, just as my life was enhanced by seeing a different side to the lady at the wedding, I'm sure that yours will be enhanced by seeing different aspects of God.

With every Blessing for the coming month



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