

Dear Friends, what an interesting summer this has been. In Aynho some of the folk got very creative with their ideas as the annual Church Fete had to be cancelled. This did not stop them from thinking of ways to raise funds for St Michaels and they created 'Pop up' Fete' stalls, selling all manner of wonderful goods and produce, from cakes and Jams to fresh vegetables and beautiful flowers; it really has been a treat. The hardworking folk have raised the huge sum of £2,500, which is incredible. A massive thank you goes out to all who have worked on this throughout the summer and thank you to all of you who have supported the events. But a special thank you must go out to Amanda Limb and Annabel Bellamy for all they have done to make this happen. Thank you ladies; it has been marvellous. You really are a pair of Saints.

As I write this letter I am just about to take two weeks annual leave. I am looking forward to spending some time in the Rectory Garden with my Husband Nic, and going down to London to visit my Mum, and my Brother and Sisters. Usually when I am on leave I take some days out visiting towns or cities, or other interesting places. This year, everything feels different and there are places we are not able to go still.

My Husband works at Stowe School, and last summer we had the pleasure of taking my Father in law and his wife for a visit to Stowe House and Grounds. I worked there some years ago too, and I was looking forward to visiting again. I had a very happy time working at Stowe, but the strange thing was that, it all seemed different to how I remembered it. I was now seeing Stowe as a visitor. We had a tour guide take us around to explain the history of the place, and it was as if I was seeing Stowe for the very first time. Although I had worked there and knew the place well, I was now seeing it through "new" eyes, and I was surprised and delighted. It made me think about revisiting other places to see what else I had missed. Revisiting places is a good thing, but it is also good to revisit our thoughts and ideas because, with the passage of time, things change; and we change as we get older too.

It greatly saddens me when I speak to folk who are not prepared to revisit their thinking about God, and the Church. Some don't believe in God and sadly some of them have had a bad experience of Church or Christians and so are not willing to 'revisit' them again. But what has surprised me even more than this is how many people I speak to who have made up their minds on preconceived ideas about Christianity. They are people who have had no personal knowledge or experience of God, or Church, or Christians to base their understanding on, and so they are basing their understanding and judgement on what they have heard, or been told by someone else, and even on television portrayals of Church and Christians, which are greatly misrepresentative. However, just like any other organisation or institution, the Church has changed greatly in recent years. It was not too many years ago that it would have been unthinkable for a woman to be a Priest or Bishop in the Church of England.... but now, here I am. Some folk I have spoken to sadly have a mental image of Church that involves the Vicar scowling at them from the Pulpit breathing threats of hell fire and brimstone, and they cannot conceive of a message of hope and love and grace that would bring joy and peace to their busy stress filled lives, and this is a great shame.

The thing is...God hasn't changed, and neither has the gospel of good news in Jesus Christ, but Church has changed; and yet there are still many people who are stuck with an idea of a Church that existed over 50 years ago. I guess the point I want to make from all this is....are you holding any preconceived ideas about God, Church, and Christians, that you could revisit in the Spirit of open mindedness? Or has something that happened in the past put you off, and given you reasons to hold onto ideas about God and Church that may be outdated and which could be revisited now?; because Church has changed,, and you are a different person now too. This year so many things are having to be completely revisited and seen with 'new' eyes because things have changed. Maybe it's time to open your heart and mind to discover, or rediscover, the things of God, Church and faith for your life... and you would be most welcome to join us at any of our Churches.

God bless you, with love Rev Sue.