

Pastoral Letter May 2022. Revd Sue Cooper writes:

Dear Friends,

I hope you are well. As we enter May, we are noticing that the beauty of our gardens and lanes are beginning to really come into their own. It has felt like a long winter but I think this reflects the tiredness that many are still feeling after the last two years of Covid's presence in the world, and the situation in Ukraine.

If we have learnt one lesson out of all of this it is that life is fragile, and it can all change in an instant. This should lead us to reflect on how we want to live in this world and what our values really are. Before Covid everyone was so busy just getting through the days and so never really had the time or energy to think about where our lives were going. But Covid has changed so many things, not least the way we reach out and care for others. We have seen this highlighted even more starkly in recent weeks with the outpouring of love and concern and charity towards the Ukrainian people in their plight.

I am also more aware of how our children and young people are not afraid to get involved in the difficult challenges that are facing the world, especially the climate and environmental issues. Much of this comes down to the good teaching and education they have had. Teachers have had a much harder time dealing with Covid than most. I have been amazed by their ability to manage their workload amidst the constant changes and challenges that they have been dealing with, and they still have many challenges ahead as they seek to make sure that all children catch up on missed learning over the past two years.

I am especially grateful for the way values are taught in school to our children. Things like charity, respect, love, forgiveness, justice, and courage; these are all Christian values which, when taught, give our children a good grounding in life and help them find depth, meaning and purpose throughout life. Over the past few months many people have come to me and told me they feel as though they have lost their way in life, and sadly I see that what's been lost is connection connection with God, and connection with any values or purpose they may have once felt.

Our Christian faith and values are like a compass, they guide us and lead us on our journey of life. In the tough times, or when we feel lost, they always point the way to keep us going on the right path and direction in life. All of us lose our way sometimes and struggle to find the path and direction we feel we should be traveling on, and that's when our faith and our values behave like a compass; they point to the things that are truly important in life, and help us navigate a way forward, step by step, and day by day with God.

Our connection with God is simple to restore, it is only ever a prayer away, and that prayer can be as simple as saying "Lord, please help me". Our connection with our values has to be navigated daily as we journey on, but our values become a measuring stick by which we can decide whether something is good or not, and whether we should be involved in, and connecting with something or someoneor not. Most of us want to live lives that have charity, respect, love, forgiveness justice and courage at the core and centre of everything we are and do...and in reality we need God to keep us on this path daily, and then we need to think about, and move in the direction of, the things, values and people that we can connect with that will help keep us on the right road.

If you feel as though you have lost your way I encourage you to reach out to God with a simple prayer every morning, even before you get out of bed, but especially before you start the day in earnest, because a simple "Please help me Lord " is enough to help you feel that you are connecting with God, and he will help you. If you keep your connection with God, he will guide you, lead you and keep you safely in his love and care. God bless you. With love Rev Sue.

Isaiah 48:17 This is what the Lord Says, your Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go." Amen