

Our Vicar Writes

A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

It is a good few years since I left school. I have returned to education several times and even been a teacher, and the rhythm of the school calendar has never left me, much like the rhythm of the church year. I remember as a child the excitement of new uniform, shoes, a tidy hair cut and a new pencil case. I would begin each September with the promise that this was the year that I would show everyone that I could do well – I am dyslexic, so the ability to impress teachers, in a 1980's, West Country school, where most teachers considered such learning difficulties as an excuse for laziness, was a tall order. However, each year I was determined to prove them wrong. I looked forward to the first day of school, to show off the effects of my growth spurt – believe me it did happen! Sadly, everyone else had grown more and were always far more equipped to impress - my excitement of a new school year was inevitably short lived.



If we were to put my story in Biblical terms, one could say that my aspirations were much like the seed that fell on rocky soil, in the parable of the sower. They never had much foundation and withered, quickly in the waning Summer sun, but in a recent reflection of this parable, I realized that my faith journey, much like my educational journey, has not been identical to the parable. Jesus' parabolic sower only gives each soil type one chance to produce a yield, but the rocky soil that I used to be, has been tilled and nutrients have been added. God has never given up on the little girl whose inspiration disappeared as fast as the warm weather in the Autumn term.

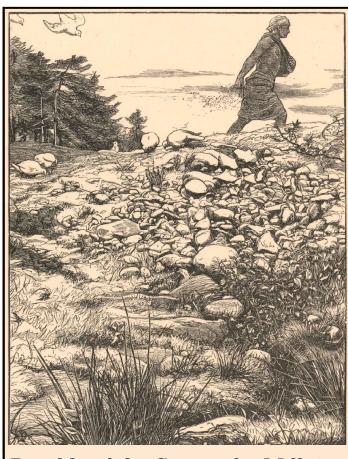
I know that I have responded to the good news of the Kingdom of God in every way that Jesus describes; I have heard and immediately forgotten because of some distraction, I have been burnt up and withered, I have had the voice of my faith and my enthusiasm choked by the demands of everyday life, and I have had times where I have gone out, proclaimed, taught, worshipped, attended to those in need, and cared for God's creation.

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Our Vicar Writes (continued)

But unlike the soils in this story, God has never stopped sowing seeds of the good news of the Kingdom upon me, however I have received it. God also knows that for seeds to flourish, it takes a true farmer to tend to them after sowing. God knows that roots go down at different times, that soils can be improved by adding to them. Faith needs to be continually fertilised. Sometimes rich soil needs to be mixed into the poorer soil in order to produce a soil that sustains a healthy crop. And this is what we need each other for; to help sustain each other's faith; to encourage; to pray with and for; to learn from each other and to teach; to mourn and commiserate with one another; to admit to one another when we are struggling and to reach out for help.

This September, we all begin a new term; a new life, post lock-down, praying that another spike will not force us back behind closed doors. We emerge from the strangest of Summers, shiny faced and ready for our new beginning, but let us not be cast down if we come across difficult soils, which choke our enthusiasm. If we are to flourish, we need God's help and we need only to ask. Jesus said "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We need to ask one another for prayer, it is as important as praying *for* someone else. God knows what each of us is struggling with and to God, nobody's pain is too small or insignificant. Everyone's prayers are heard and cared about and loved, even if it does not feel that way.



Parable of the Sower - by Millais.

So, in our time of new beginnings, I ask you to pray for one another, I ask for prayers as my sons and I settle in here, I ask you to know that I will be and have been praying for you and I ask you to know that God hears all our prayers and knows our dreams and hopes for the future and will be in all that comes from them.

Looking forward to meeting you face to face.

God bless,
Rev'd Cait Walker

Church News

Induction Service for Revd. Cait Walker

The Service of Induction for our new vicar, Revd. Cait Walker, will take place in St Michael's Church, Mottram in Longdendale at 7pm on Wednesday 23 September 2020.

Due to the current Covid-19 situation Chester Diocese has limited the total number of people we can have in the church building to 30, and this includes the new vicar and her family and all Diocesan officials. This means that, unfortunately, this will not be an "everyone welcome" event. Letters of invitation will be sent out shortly.

We are hoping to video the entire service, so if you are not present at the service itself it will be available to view later.

*David and Dejan
Churchwardens*

Churches and Young People in Lockdown

Recent research by the Allchurches Trust has found that lockdown had one good result: it was "a major driver for churches to embrace digital opportunities and engage with families online."

The research found that in recent months, more than half of churches (55 per cent) have been able to engage children and young people through regular online worship; 46 per cent have run family focused online activities for children and parents; and 31 per cent have run online activities and challenges for young people. Similar numbers have reached out by phone and e-mail.

A spokesman for the Trust said: "What's heartening are the many examples of churches that have quickly adapted to launch online activities ... when physical youth work was not an option." The churches have been "creative in meeting the needs of the families and young people they work with" and "reaching others they might not previously have been able to engage with."

Around £1.4 million pounds has now been given to more than 140 projects across the UK and Ireland since Allchurches Trust's *Growing Lives* programme launched in May 2019. It is aimed at enabling churches and Christian charities to help young people reach their potential. More information at: <https://www.allchurches.co.uk>