



community

keeping in touch...

FEBRUARY 2021

Dear friends,

I know it's a while since we were all in church together, but some of you may remember an old song that we sometimes sing with the children that begins with the words: "*We want you to have a good day.*" It comes from away back in the 1970's at a time when the American way of saying 'goodbye' was to say, "Have a nice day!"

I remember at the time I was given a pair of coloured bootlaces that had those words printed along them several times. I used one of them to hold my guitar strap on to the neck of my old guitar. And guess what? It's still there!

What would make a good day, or a nice day, to you now? I suspect, after so many months of restrictions, our requirements for labelling any day as a good one are probably much lower than they might have been this time last year! At the moment every day seems so much like the one before that sometimes I find it hard to remember what day of the week it actually is! There are so few (if any) special events to look forward to.

Last summer one of our grandchildren, who had turned three during the locked-down month of May, said to us poignantly, "*I had a birthday, but nobody came!*"

Talking of birthdays, there is a saying ‘doing the rounds’ of social media at the moment, which goes something like this:

“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.”

Almost everyone who posts this saying on the internet attributes it to the writer Mark Twain. However, it is virtually certain that Mark Twain did not say it, nor write it.

Does that matter? Probably not.

Is it true? Now that’s a harder question to answer.

I’m sure nearly everyone will know their own birthday and will probably celebrate it in one way or another (though I suspect a seventh birthday is likely to be celebrated in a different way from a sixty-seventh!)

It was one of my favourite writers, Henri Nouwen, who explained why your birthday is certainly one of the most important days in your life when he wrote:

“Birthdays need to be celebrated. I think it is more important to celebrate a birthday than a successful exam or promotion or a victory. because to celebrate a birthday means to say to someone "thank you for being you".”— *Henri J.M. Nouwen, Here and Now: Living in the Spirit*

So, your birthday (as our granddaughter knew well) *is* a big day, because it’s about *who* you are and *what* you mean to other people and it looks back to that *most important* day when your life began.

But, returning to the anonymous quotation, what if you never experience that other *most important* day? What if you never discover *why* you’re here?

Sadly, I suspect some people never do, and some never even ask themselves the question, “Why am I here?”

What a tragedy if you were to come to the end of your life and find that you have to say, “I had a life, but I never did find out why.”

As Christians, we know that we are first of all loved by God in spite of everything. In response to God’s love, one of the *main* purposes of all of our lives then must surely be to love God in return and to serve him by loving and caring for other people. If you like, it is knowing *who* we are in God’s sight that helps us to see *why* we are here.

We are here for God and for each other.

But I think where our anonymous (*not* Mark Twain) quotation may be mistaken is in the suggestion that this discovery of the purpose of your life is a one-off event; something that happens just on one particular day of your life. I reckon it can and should happen lots of times; that in fact it’s more of an ongoing process of listening for God, of noticing God’s presence in other people, in the world around, in the things that happen to us, and then beginning to learn and re-learn new things every day.

So let me twist the quotation around and say, **“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born ... and today.”**

We want you to have a good day.

We want you to know God’s love.

Your minister and friend,



KIRKTONPARISHCHURCH
A PLACE FOR ALL



A word from our Youth & Children's Worker



Have you ever played Scrabble?

It is one of the many games that is guaranteed to cause a fair few arguments in our house. Mainly because there will be a dispute or disputes over words that have been played. Words that some people (me) try to claim are proper words and which are words that can be used in a sentence or found in an online dictionary.

My best ever attempt at trying to use such a disputed word was BIGLY (would have scored me 59 points – but my fellow players disallowed it).

In 2020 over 650 new words were added to the official Oxford English Dictionary. Sadly, bigly is not one of them. Some words that have been added last year (and you will not be surprised in the slightest) are...Corona...Zoom...Physical Distancing.

But the new word I want to talk about today is TOOMUCHERY and I am certain it will be added to the OED in 2021. It is without a doubt the perfect word to sum up exactly how we are all feeling about things at the moment. Life at the moment can feel a little challenging for us all. From the youngest to the oldest. Too much to do. Too much to think/worry about. Too much home schooling and working from home. Too much not being able to see or hug the people you love. Too much not being able to do normal everyday things. It is all just TOOMUCHERY!

So, when it all just gets TOOMUCHERY. Stop and just take some time out. Talk to those you love and that love you. Talk to God because he loves you and he knows just how much we are going through – nothing is ever too much to take to him.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesley".