Vicars Musings post-holiday.

Dear Friends.

It was an interesting and strange experience traveling to France, a journey that is familiar, yet this time quite different so unfamiliar. The numerous diversions and multiple alterations to my outward and return journeys the blustery weather, rules at the ports all contributed to the unfamiliarity. On board the regulations meant the usual hustle and bustle was missing. No chatting with other passengers in the restaurant or the bar, wearing of masks and socially distancing always observed in a calm efficient manner, although “quelle horreur” no carry to car service for my liquid purchases! In Brittainy, the shops and public buildings had signs stating- “masques est obligatoire,” and everyone complied. I was able to visit many of my favorite places and a found few new places to walk, swim, relax and of course to eat!

A familiar and important part of my holiday is having time to read, this year my favourite book was “Ammonites and Leaping Fish” in which Penelope Lively charts the story of her life. It is a brilliant read and a powerful memoir. Resonating within the book is this theme of life being familiar yet different. She reflects on what it is like to be old as well as how memory shapes us. Some of the places she has visited and lived, along with the events she recalls are recognizable to me as they are shared places however they are her memories and experiences and perspectives familiar yet different. Finally, she turns to the six treasured possessions to speak eloquently about who she is and where she's been - fragments of memories from a life well lived.

Living well through familiar yet unfamiliar times, a theme that sums up how our life is now, living with new normal whatever that is! Trying to function and live life in quite different and everchanging ways. Trying to make sense of the myriad of new and amended guidelines discerning what is obligatory and what is a guideline, confusing even for those writing and delivering them! During quarantine I have continued to ponder on what we can do rather than what we can’t in relation to Harvest/All Souls/Advent and Christmas. All are important festivals in our Christian Calendar all will happen in some way, your thoughts and ideas will be welcome, more on this to come.

As the season changes, I feel a huge weariness in the conversations I have had both on holiday with my Breton friends over glass of pastis and since my return with many of you on the phone. I can recognize that feeling in myself when thinking about the challenges ahead. Our challenge over the next few months is staying positive, motivated and inspired! I know the cold wet weather and darker days do not help! Nor does the fear of tightening restrictions all bring with them doom gloom and despondency. Recently I saw a poster produced by the Diocese of Oxford. Personally, I think it gives much food for thought. I will explore these suggestions in greater detail in next month’s Uplander.

I hope you find them useful and can find ways to live well through the coming months.

