

5th May 2020

Dear Friends

Isaiah 52 vs 7 reads: how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who comes with good news, who announces salvation and says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'.

In the early 1980s, the song 'Our God reigns', which is inspired by these words, had become an anthem for many Christians. I can remember singing it in the open air with hundreds of others at Bishopsgate in Leicester.

Isaiah was celebrating the return of God's people from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem. As he writes elsewhere: 'therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing into Zion and everlasting joy will be upon their heads!' (Isaiah 35 vs 10.)

When we finally return to New North Road it will be a moment of joy and celebration and for some of you with very long memories, it may even remind you of when people returned from worshipping elsewhere to the new church when it was opened.

In the meanwhile, we need good news stories to inspire us and put a smile on our faces. Many people have found this in the story of Captain Tom Moore who has walked a hundred laps of his garden to celebrate his 100th birthday, seeking to raise a £1000 for the NHS. Eventually he raised over £30 million and completed his final lap with a guard of honour, while his birthday was marked by an RAF fly-past. For me, the most moving thing about this was a photograph of more than 125,000 cards displayed on the floor of the great hall of Bedford School that were sent to him by members of the public. Captain Tom was doing what he could and it's a reminder that we can all make a small difference that can be magnified by the goodwill of others.

On Friday, many people will be celebrating an event which Captain Tom - like some of you - will remember: V.E. Day. Seventy-five years ago, the second world war in Europe was over, although it would continue elsewhere a little longer and some of the horrors of that war, such as the concentration camps, were still coming to light. Yet it was a moment of joy and national thanksgiving worth celebrating and remembering even

seventy-five years later. Shortly afterwards, the outcome of the general election was announced in which a new government led by Clement Attlee was swept to power with a vision of forging a new Britain. Perhaps the most enduring legacy of that vision was the creation of the NHS whose members we have been celebrating and applauding every Thursday evening at eight.

After one famous battle, Winston Churchill said, 'This is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end, it is perhaps the end of the beginning.' That seems to me to be a good description of where we are as the first tentative and uncertain steps are taken to relax the restrictions we are living with. There is so much still to do, and it will still call for us to practise patience. It will be a while before we return with singing and songs of joy but in the meanwhile, we can encourage each other with good news whenever we can.

Please can I invite you to remember David and his family at the funeral for Marjorie on Monday the 11th of May. Please also remember the family of Mavis Lawrence who has died. Her funeral will be on Monday 18th of May.

Please can I also remind you of our prayer goals for 2020. One of these was that people would step up to new responsibilities. We may create a situations vacant column so you can see where there are opportunities to serve but, in this letter, I want to focus your attention on one particular opportunity. This opportunity could be for one person or it could be shared by two people.

In a very few months Gordon our secretary will be stepping down as our secretary and he is looking forward to mentoring someone else in this role. Gordon is irreplaceable and unique so it's not a question of stepping into his shoes but of seeking to do this in your own way. Please can I ask you to weigh in your conscience and before God if God is calling you to step up to this job or nudging you to ask someone else if they have considered this. Please do call or message me if you would like to talk this over.

Let me conclude with the words of that anthem, reminding us that through this crisis with all of its challenges and difficulties, our God is sovereign: 'Our God reigns!'

Your friend and pastor

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