

WEY VALLEY – WEEKLY CIRCUIT LETTER – 23 August 2023

Barrie Tabraham

‘Pushing an image!’

James 1:22-25 ²² But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³ For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴ for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵ But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

I want to share with you an incident early in my ministry which makes me smile and grimace in about equal proportions; names have been withheld to protect the innocent!

The year, if memory serves me correctly, was 1985, and I was taking the funeral service of a friend of a church member (in Prescot, Merseyside) and had popped in to see the family prior to the service, as I usually did. After we’d chatted and prayed together, one of our older members who was there, asked if she could have a ride in my car to the crematorium in St Helens. “No problem”, I replied – “Hop in.”

Unfortunately, as we were approaching the traffic lights leaving Prescot, the car decided to misbehave, it stuttered several times, then came to a gentle stop. No amount of coaxing (or threats à la Basil Faulty) could get it going again. “Can you steer while I give the car a push?” I asked my passenger. “Sorry, no – I’ve never driven a car in my life”, she replied. Now we had a problem, as she was in her mid-seventies, and what the locals would have called ‘a bonny lass’ – which, in our parlance, meant that she was a very large lady.



Yes – you can guess what’s coming. The only way we could get to the committal in St Helens was for her to push the car up the slight incline, through the traffic lights and then down the gentle slope the other side, allowing me to bump-start the car back into life . . . which is what we did.

I was very lucky that no reporters were passing, as it would have made a scandalous story for the local newspaper. As it was, a number of passing motorists gave me a mixture of horrified stares, frowns and filthy looks as they saw a large, elderly, white-haired lady pushing a car containing a (youngish) member of the clergy. Because I was wearing black with a full collar, I couldn’t have been mistaken for anyone else.

I thank God that all turned out well in the end. We got to the crematorium on time; my dear, unselfish church member didn’t have a heart attack; I resolved in future never to have a car that might break down at an inopportune moment; more importantly, it gave me a lesson in humility and made me think about the image that we consciously and unconsciously project. In his quite hard-hitting letter, **James** reminds us that there must not be a mis-match between our true selves (the people God intended us to be) and the way we behave. By God’s grace we must always seek to present the real ‘us’ to others, just as we would always wish to see others as they truly are.

That little incident also reminded me of the danger of passing judgment on others. I wonder how many people who saw the two of us – one perspiring as she pushed the vehicle, the other (me) looking tense and embarrassed – would have realised the reason for the bizarre situation that they were witnessing. Things are rarely what they appear to be.

We need to remember that each of us is a ‘work in progress’ – that the Spirit God is working her loving way slowly but surely in our hearts and minds, transforming us into the image of Christ our saviour, ‘in whom we live and move and have our being.’

A Prayer: Loving God, give me patience, wisdom and humility in those moments when things seem to be outside my control and life is difficult and frustrating. Help me to smile at my own foolishness and to remember that you are always working your loving way in and through us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Resources/Good News

Students of Faith Exhibition - 24 August to 8 October

St. Mary's Church is proud to host 'Students of Faith' - a unique display of pictures of the diversity of faith backgrounds within the student body at the University of Surrey.

The University has recently been voted 2nd in the country for student wellbeing and has one of the most diverse student chaplaincy teams in the country with 15 Chaplains working together as a team to represent eight different faith communities.

See Flyer on the next page.



24th August - 8th October
St. Mary's Church
Quarry St, Guildford



**Proud to be Surrey - Students of Different
Faiths and Worldviews**

Exploring the wide range of faith stories and perspectives that are represented within the student body of the University of Surrey

