

Friends

“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord. “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

Perhaps by the time you read this, the sun will be peeping through again, although at the moment my weather forecast app is predicting cloud all week, with the odd interruption of rain.

We had a promise of spring last Saturday. The sun was out, the sky was blue, and although it was still quite chilly there was that freshness that hinted at better weather to come. In the same way, we have experienced times when our churches are thriving and so great has the “company of preachers” been in this circuit that we have been able to offer appointments to others less blessed than us, and then there are times, as in the coming quarter, when we really are struggling to fill the plan.

We can perhaps take comfort in the seasonal nature of life as we look at our churches and wonder about dwindling membership and lack of interest in a life of faith in the wider community. The whole Biblical account from Creation onwards is a story of ebbs and flows. The people defy God, as with Adam and Eve, the building of the Tower of Babel and various events in the desert Exodus, and they ignore God, both in the lead up to the Flood and many times challenged by the prophets in between David and the birth of Christ (about 1500 years). Subsequent to that first heady Pentecost, the Church has continued to rise and fall, and Methodism grew up as a movement to spread Scriptural holiness across the land because it was needed and not just because John and Charles Wesley thought it would be a good idea.

Matthew 24:35 tell us that Jesus said: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” As we journey through another Lent, towards another Easter and another hope for a more normal summer, we also journey in the knowledge that however difficult these times are, God is with us. After all, two years ago, I wrote very similar words as we cycled in and out of lockdowns and now the whole covid

experience seems to belong to a different lifetime. God is in his heaven, and although not everything is right with the world, still he cares for us and his love will never leave us.

God bless, Vicci