

Dear Friends

At the recent District Synod, our Chair, Rev Rachel Parkinson, introduced us to the District theme of the year ahead: **Courage**. Anyone who has met Rachel will know that she is no stranger to the attribute. Following her on Facebook, you quickly discover that her comfort zone is in challenging herself, both



Rachel's puppets tell the Christmas story

physically - running, cycling, walking, and in ministry –finding new ways creatively and enthusiastically to draw attention to our faith story and its relevance to the communities and world in which we live. With her off-the-wall ideas there is often huge potential for embarrassment and failure but I've never heard anyone speak of her other than with admiration and delight in her freshness and effectiveness at spreading God's word.

For lesser mortals, change may be embraced with greater reluctance, and like the changing of the seasons is forced upon them. The sad end to regular

Sunday worship at the chapels at Cleobury and Tenbury wouldn't have happened if there had been a viable alternative to keep things going. But the change has released resources and energy for the possibility of fresh starts in both places – a Community Youth Hub in Cleobury and ecumenical family outreach in Tenbury. It's an encouraging sign that the "talents" entrusted to us are being put to good use – that we are ploughing fresh furrows, sowing in order to reap (Luke 19.22)

Nothing stands still. At a personal level, there are related questions about how to cope with change forced upon us by health issues or advancing years for ourselves or our loved ones – do I cling on to what I have until it is impossible to sustain any longer? Or can I courageously let go of the familiar and look at new ways of being and doing that may be a blessing to others as well as myself?

The Autumn brings relief from the Summer heat and a delight of colours and moods as nature moves on. To "wish that Summer will always be here" as the song says, is to turn our back on the blessings of rhythm and change.

There may be time for us courageously to embrace change in our lives and our churches before it is forced upon us – to ask "is there a new opportunity, a better way?" And even if we are forced to let go, let us not always take the safest option. Let us find the courage to take risks and find the new plans God has for our "abundant life" with Him.

Autumn blessings

Kim