

Letters from the Churches

Four years ago in May our daughter and son-in-law flew to America. Their flight booking was the millionth received and, to acknowledge this, US Airways presented them with tickets upgraded to first class travel.

We may be wistfully thinking ‘dream on’ when it comes to ourselves being one in a million, but I have good news because that is how God views each of us. We are precious to Him and He loves you and me as if we were the only one. That makes us one in millions!

Tora and David did not go on holiday they emigrated with Ellie the dog; all three set off to start a new life. Many of us will not travel so far in our quest for new opportunities and challenges, or to leave behind the old and have a fresh start, however we can all experience a new life this very moment without physically moving an inch.

What life in the States would bring was of course unknown, but what life in the Lord Jesus Christ brings is peace, the knowledge of going to heaven when we die, a love that accepts us as we are and a power to weather the storms we all experience. Our ticket to all this is found in the Gospel of John Chapter 3 verse 16, ‘For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that *(insert your name)* who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life’. Once you personalise that verse before God, with the intention of being in an intimate relationship with Him, you are safe wherever and forever, one in a million not just for a journey across the Atlantic, but for all eternity.

Reverend Gillian Belford

Who ‘G.W.’ was is now lost in history, but G.W. himself has certainly left his mark. In the year 1785 he (I’m assuming it was a man) carved his initials into the stonework of the porch at All Saints Church, Goxhill. I note this historical act of petty vandalism virtually every time I unlock the church. It is also difficult to imagine that the interior of All Saints, now so light and dignified, was itself once the target of ‘official’ vandalism.

Centuries ago, few ordinary people could read and write, and the Bible itself was only available in a Latin translation. Pictures, therefore, played a big part in people acquiring an understanding of Christianity and the walls of most of our churches were ablaze with images from the Bible and pictures of Saints. When the great wave of religious reformation came in the 16th century, all this was declared superstitious nonsense and bands of enthusiastic puritans white-washed or scrubbed out an irreplaceable part of our religious and cultural heritage. Some pictures escaped obliteration and in All Saints some artwork in a porch was overlooked and traces of a unique painting remain to this day.

Some people might bemoan the fact that the Christian foundation of our nation has also been eroded over the centuries and only small traces remain. I’m not sure this is the case. What may well be happening is that the traditional way in which we have worshipped and met has changed and the old ways are not reaching the contemporary generation in the way they did. The simple result is not that people stop believing – they stop attending.

Nationally the church is investing much thought and energy into developing and experimenting with alternative services and new ways that people can meet to explore and express the spiritual dimension of life, without which we are all diminished. If you feel that there is something missing in your life and you haven’t been to church recently (or even if you haven’t been to church at all), why not come along on Sunday morning and give it a try.

Reverend John Girtchen

Introductions to both churches are available on the website: www.goxhillgander.com