



## The Vicar's Letter

Dear Friends,

As the summer draws to a close, and schools return for a new academic year, our minds once again return to the tasks and meetings and routines that lie ahead of us – our plans for Harvest, Advent and Christmas; where will we spend Christmas and New Year? Is it time to change our summer wardrobe for our winter clothes? We may have a new resolve to do things in a different way or with more enthusiasm as, most likely, we have been able to take some time for rest and relaxation over the summer and have used this time to think about our ordinary every day activities. Of course this is a generalisation and will not hold true for everyone. But it is true to say that human beings do not function well unless they are able to take some rest. In fact, taking some rest is actually divinely instituted.

When one reads the Book of Genesis and the first creation narrative we discover that God worked/created the world in 6 days and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day he rested. This poetic depiction of creation gave us the Sabbath, the 7<sup>th</sup> day – a day of rest with strict laws governing what you could or could not do, a day to be spent in God's presence. The people of Israel then adopted this model as their way of life, and adapted it. For instance, a farmer could work the land for 6 years, but was ordered to let it rest for the 7<sup>th</sup> year. This understanding of working 6 days and resting on the 7<sup>th</sup> has been within our culture for centuries – although not everyone was able to share in it. Until 1994 trading on the Sabbath in the UK – or on Sunday since that was a weekly celebration of the resurrection – was forbidden by Law, an enforced day-off for most people.

Since 1994, the growth of consumerism and secularism, the growth of our multi-cultural society, and the influence of technology, the Sabbath has lost a lot of its meaning. For peoples of different faiths the day of rest will vary. For others their leisure activity requires people to work to support that activity. It is not as simple as perhaps once was. But it is still evident – especially from statistics recording burnout, breakdown, stress and depression, that taking a day of rest is important to one's health.

Thankfully the Church has always maintained this position of having a day of rest and is perhaps a prophetic voice in our busy world of today. Clergy, for instance, are traditionally required to work 6 days and have the 7<sup>th</sup> as a day of rest, and are encouraged to take a Sabbatical (traditionally every 7<sup>th</sup> year of ministry but now a days there are a few other stipulations).

From 1 September, as you will no doubt know, after 12 years of ministry, I shall be taking a 3 month Sabbatical. This will be a time to rest, recharge, and re-energise myself and my ministry. I shall spend some time analysing Church Leadership but also giving time to re-establish my prayer life and the call and direction God is requiring of me. Although I shall not be in active ministry during this time I shall still be praying for you all, the life of the Parish, and for the Church Wardens and Ministry Team. If you are able, please continue to pray for me during this time and certainly pray for all who will be leading you and walking beside you.

I look forward to being with you all again in time for Advent.

Every blessing in Christ,

*Mike*