

02 September 2024

As we begin the new connexional year, I write to you from a different study. Robin and I, the dogs and the children’s stuff moved to the manse at Chasetown in the last week of August. I couldn’t help thinking about the Israelites moving around as they did. Pressing on, not without grumbling or hesitation, not always with joy in their hearts and sometimes with great defiance of what the Lord expected them to do. Whilst my reflections on the Israelites moving around was for me quite literal this summer, I felt a keen metaphor for us as God’s people, called to move onwards in his love and grace. The Israelites pressed on towards the promised land, led by God – the fiery, cloudy pillar to guide them.

Summer is a great time to watch hours and hours of sport on TV. Robin and I are Tour de France enthusiasts. There doesn’t seem to be any end to the strength and stamina of the cyclists, battling out over hundreds of kilometres day after day in sweltering heat, pouring rain, even snow-capped mountains in parts. They travel at eye watering speeds considering they have no protective clothing other than a helmet. Each morning, they get up and go again, for another day in the saddle. In some of the crashes we witnessed from the safety and comfort of the sofa, it felt impossible that the rider or the bike would be able to continue, but with the medical car driving alongside the cyclist on a new bike off the roof of the support vehicle, they press on, bandaged, bleeding and no doubt a little uncomfortable.

I think this provides another metaphor for how we’re called to live as God’s people. The road may seem endless, the conditions for travel not very favourable, we may be bruised and battered by events, but God, our refuge and strength, comes alongside us to bandage the wounds, heal the broken hearted and enable us to press on. We may feel uncomfortable, and things may seem to be stacked against us, but God continues his work, day after day and we’re called to join in and do what he’s called us to do. His will, not ours, be done in all things.

As part of the mission planning for the circuit, the CLT continue to work hard behind the scenes to enable mission and ministry in the circuit to flourish, not just to exist. Please continue to pray for all those in positions of leadership in the local church, the circuit, the district and the connexion.

As we journey with God into this new connexional year I’m reminded of the words by the poet Minnie Louise Haskins:

*And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: ‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.’*

*And he replied: ‘Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.’*

*So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.*

Every blessing,

*Samantha*

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2013/12/10/the-gate-of-the-year-minnie-louise-haskins-1875-1957/> (accessed 02.09.24)

**Cannock Chase Circuit | Superintendent Minister: The Reverend Samantha Hagerman |  
Telephone: 07739 582691**