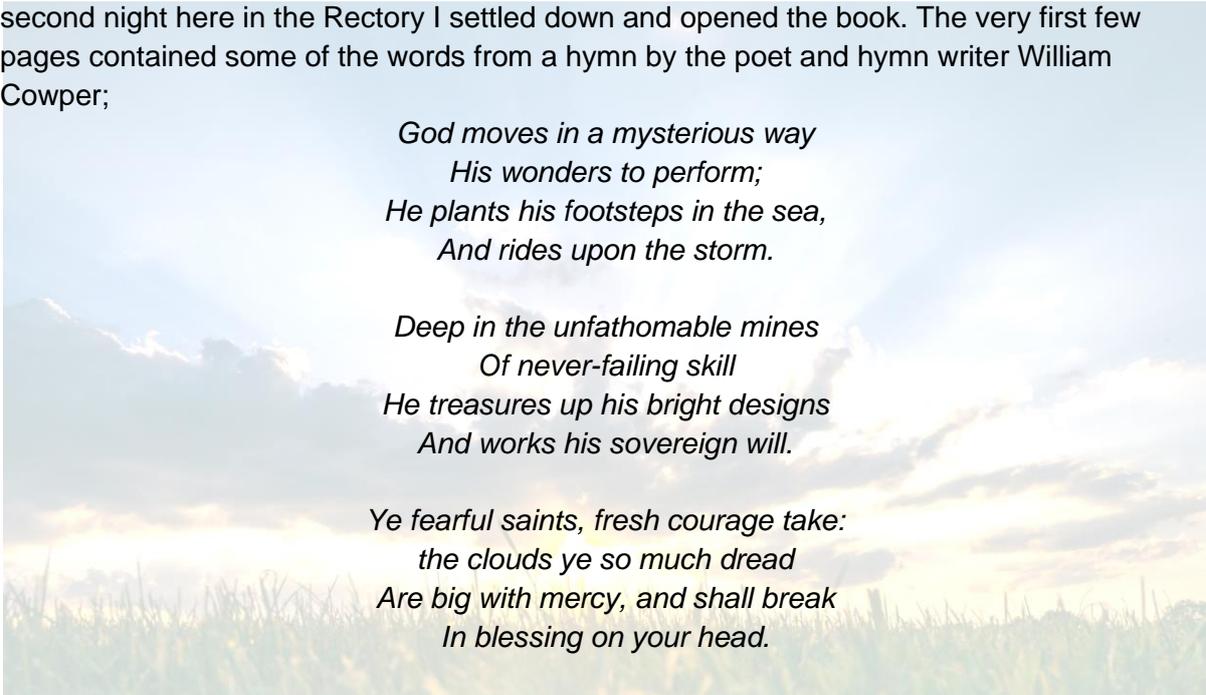


Pastoral Letter

Dear friends,

Whilst preparing for my move, I found myself revisiting my collection of books in my study. As I was looking through them I came across a small little book which has the title; *Hope of the ages, A Treasury of Christian Inspiration*. I remembered that I'd been given the book many years ago and I realised, as I picked it up, that I hadn't actually ever sat down and read it. As I flicked through it I found out that each of the pages, as well as having a short passage to reflect upon, also had alongside it a colourful picture from the National gallery. On the inside cover it said; *This lovely book contains a message of hope drawn from 2,000 years of Christian spirituality... these timeless reflections offer a sense of security as we embrace the future.*

On beginning to unpack my books when I arrived two weeks ago (can it really only be two weeks), of all the book boxes that I had, the first one contained the small book. So on my second night here in the Rectory I settled down and opened the book. The very first few pages contained some of the words from a hymn by the poet and hymn writer William Cowper;



*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in the unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up his bright designs
And works his sovereign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take:
the clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessing on your head.*

Below the words of the hymn was a picture of a ship being tossed about upon the waves of a violent storm, but with a closer look at the picture you could just make out that the light source illuminating the scene was through the clouds, just beginning to break, to one side of the picture.

I've always found that there's something spectacularly beautiful to see the sun breaking through the clouds. Some have even suggested, that there's almost a sense of the divine, about the way the rays of the sun break through. I always have felt very blessed when I see such a beautiful sight. As we individually and together as communities in our benefice, journey through what sometimes might feel like stormy weather, we know as Christians that we live in the mystery of how God moves, but we are also assured of God's blessing, God's light, as it breaks through the clouds into our lives.

Love & prayers
Revd Neil