

## Pastoral letter 11<sup>th</sup> February

Dear friends,

After taking part in several Zoom meetings on the computer a few days ago, I decided that, even though it was very cold outside, I needed to go out for a walk to stretch my legs and get some fresh air. So I wrapped myself up with scarf and gloves and set out into the darkness of the evening, did I say that it was almost 10 O'clock at night that I decided that a walk was needed?

It was my first time walking along the country lanes in the darkness since moving in. On the crisp winter evening what struck me immediately was the level of the darkness. The lack of light pollution gave to my eyes chance to become very quickly accustomed to the darkness. As the owls called to each other I was drawn to look upwards and my walk then took on a whole new perspective, the night sky was full of stars, as the moon shone with such clarity, it was utterly beguiling.

The glorious constellations beautifully mapped out the night sky that seemed far larger than it had looked earlier in the day. It was almost like the night sky, filled with thousands of visible stars, was saying 'look at us', it was that beautiful. I stood still simply looking and seeing the majesty of the scene that was constantly revealing itself above me. I kept seeing new stars and new constellations, the enormity of the sky and the stars was breath taking.

When I eventually returned home I couldn't get what I'd seen in the night sky out of my mind, so as part of my night prayers, I decided to read the passages in the Psalms that mentioned stars. One of the passages spoke very powerfully to me as I reflected upon what I'd seen but also as I prepare myself for the beginning of Lent next week;

***When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? (psalm 8 3-4)***

The vastness of the world and the enormity of the universe and beyond, might get us at times to maybe even question who we are in relation to the size of everything that is around us. How does God know me in the 7.8 billion people on earth? When Jesus tells the crowd in Luke 12 v7 that 'even the hairs of your head are all counted', even for those of us (including myself) who might well be going slightly bald or are there already, Jesus assures us that God knows us uniquely. The uniqueness of the DNA found in our hair, gives to us our unique physical identity, but if we acknowledge that nothing is impossible for God, then God's knowledge of and love for us, is unique to us but is also there for everyone.

Love & prayers

Revd Neil

