

**The Rectory,  
Greenwood Lane,  
St Fagans,  
CF5 6EL  
curateofradyr@gmail.com  
02920 567956**

Dear Friends

It has been a month since I wrote to you and already we are in the second week of our Lenten journey together; a time offered to us to evaluate our faith, our relationship with God, each other, and our service as a community. Many of us are doing this through the prayerful reading, reflection and discussion of our Lent book 'Opening our Lives', written by Trystan, which invites us to open ourselves to consider God's presence in the ordinary everyday events of life. I don't know about you, but over the last few weeks some days have passed quickly and some have felt long and arduous. Some days I have felt God's presence and others I have struggled to see it. So, today, I offer my own reflections to you; the conversations I have had, the people I have met and where I have felt God's presence or hand in everyday life.

Trystan was my Diocesan Director of Ordinands for a few years when I entered the discernment process. We met once a month to talk and pray together. I remember him telling me that in ministry there are busy times and quiet times, and in the quiet times to rest and take time out. You may recall at the beginning of February Vicki and myself both decided to take some time out to recharge our spiritual batteries.

In order to clear my diary, as it were, I had two Zoom funeral meetings to undertake and prepare for. Each meeting is different. Everyone's grief is different, and you cannot prepare for what may or may not happen. You are dependent on God's guiding hand. Both these families seemed to share a deep sadness of not being able to see their loved ones for months, due to the restrictions, which added another dimension to grief.

I spoke to the family following my officiating at one of these funerals. The brother of the deceased mentioned that he was the last to carry the family name. Only the night before I had been speaking with my son William about not changing my name when I marry in six weeks' time. Both my sons have my maiden name, Huxtable, and their fathers surname, Goy. My brother has no children and so our family name would disappear. Also, I wanted to retain the same name as my children. Names are important to us, they are part of our personal and corporate identity. Currently we are trying to agree on a name for our Ministry Area. I tried to take the first three letters of each area to create a quirky acronym all I came up with were the words 'standard' or 'grandad', 'acclaimed' or 'candlepin'. I am sure Carol Vorderman could have fared better!

Our reading today, from Genesis, speaks of a change of name. Abram and Sarai are given new names, Abraham and Sara. Names are important in the Old Testament; they reflect character and destiny. In this reading we see the promise of the everlasting covenant between God and Abraham, a promise that is for all generations. Abraham and Sara's journey of faith was not easy. They must have had doubts and disappointments, but despite this the story tells us to trust in God and his promise.

Having a few days between the funerals, I entered into a time of retreat, but less than 48hrs in, things changed dramatically. Simon shared some news on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February. His father, who had undergone radiotherapy for the last three months, had been given the all-clear with regards to his cancer, which meant that as soon as the restrictions allowed, Simon would soon be able to visit his parents. We were overjoyed and thankful for this news. Simon spoke to his father and his mother, Pam, that evening.

The following day, at 10am, Pam died suddenly. I went to visit Simon, who is my support bubble, so I did not break any laws you will be glad to hear, but I suddenly realised that this was a space that had been given to us. God's hand was certainly in this situation. Simon expressed the same feelings as those families who were grieving. He felt sadness that he had not seen his mother for months but was thankful that he had spoken with her the night before. We were contacted by the hospital and given permission to see Pam. Simon was



**North Wales countryside**

keen to go and I was thankful to be with him, familiar ground for me being an ex Accident and Emergency nurse – again , you see, God’s hand in all things. Simon journeyed onwards to be with Chris, his father. I undertook the long journey home through the Welsh countryside, allowing time for reflection, to give thanks and to pray. Probably more time that I would have had if I had stayed at home!

The only day available for the funeral at the crematorium was 23<sup>rd</sup> February; otherwise we were looking towards March. Pam had left strict instructions - a simple service, no wearing black, wear your favourite colour, because she believed so deeply in the resurrection.

St Paul’s Letter to the Romans gives us his interpretation of the Abraham story, as the example of one who stays faithful. Paul highlights that this Covenant promise came before the law; a promise for Gentile and Jew alike; a promise fulfilled in the resurrection. The promise of relationship is built on faith and that is open to everyone who trusts in God.

As I travelled back for the funeral, I had time again to reflect, and that evening we shared a meal and wine into the early hours. I was so fortunate to listen to the family stories, look at pictures and newspaper clippings of Pam’s journey to the priesthood. Pam served in the Lichfield Diocese. She was made a Deaconess in 1986 and ordained Priest in 1994, part of the first wave of women into the priesthood, along with Bishop June and Archdean Peggy Jackson. We then looked at the family tree. Chris, who’s surname is Freeman, said to me that this generation will be the last of the Freemans, as Simon has no children and his sister has married and taken her husband’s name. I asked him how he felt about that. He said, “names change, and that’s part of the plan. From the old comes the new, memories live on way beyond that which is written”. Such beautiful words.



**20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination of Women, Litchfield Diocese**

The service was conducted by Rev Maureen Read who had worked with Pam for the last seven years, and, yes, I wore my bright red coat! Maureen approached me afterwards and told me how Pam had presided at her last service on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and announced to the congregation that she was overjoyed to be handing on her stoles to her ‘very nearly’ daughter-in-law. Maureen said Pam always thanked God that Simon and I had met and was so happy that Simon and I were to be married. So, our wedding will go ahead as planned. When the time comes to wear those stoles, I will do so with such a grateful heart. I will be reminded to trust and to hold fast to God’s faithful promise.

I would like to thank everyone for their cards and kindness. Knowing you are held in prayer has been of great comfort to Simon myself and his family.

Love in Christ.

Belinda



**20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrating women priests in London (Bishop June front row, Pam front row second from right)**