

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #31

13th October 2020

Dear Church Family,

Few things symbolise the onset of autumn quite as well as the sight of a squirrel scampering around the garden, industriously burying nuts. This week I've become very aware of the squirrels in both the front and back gardens of the Rectory. Out the front, they've been collecting acorns which have fallen from the path and burying them in the



grass along the back wall of the Church Hall. And out the back, I've watched as they've been burying all sorts in the now empty summer pots, the borders and the lawn (much to Martyn's dismay!). In the same way that many of you have been gathering autumn fruits and making jams and chutneys for the winter, the squirrels have been gathering food to carry them through the winter months when food is harder to come by.

When you do a little research on squirrels, it throws up some interesting facts. Apparently tree squirrels use a technique called 'spatial chunking' to sort out and bury their nuts by size, type, and perhaps nutritional value and taste. When they are hungry later, it is theorised, they can remember where to find what they want. The art of burying them – just an inch under the soil - is called 'caching'. Squirrels are known to crack open a nut before burying it, to keep it from germinating. How clever is that! But the reason for the spatial chunking is also very clever and very strategic. The more widely dispersed the food, the lower the risk that a hungry competitor will discover the squirrel's entire supply and destroy it in one go. The squirrel equivalent of not 'putting all your eggs in one basket'.

But how do they find what they've hidden? Well, it's down to two things: an amazing sense of smell, and an equally amazing memory, helped by the sorting process above. This enables them to find the buried treasure again when it's needed most.

As you'd expect, this got me thinking about our spiritual lives. As the Covid infection rate rises and the threat of a further lockdown becomes more likely, are there things we can do *now* to help us survive the inevitable darkness that a winter lockdown may bring? Are there Bible stories, particular verses from Scripture or words from Christian authors that have been useful to you in the past, have lifted you when you've felt down? If so, maybe now is the time to dig them out, write them on post-it notes or something similar, and then secrete them around the house to be retrieved when they are needed most. I tend to write passages in my notebook, but don't always record where I've read them. This one from an entry in 2016 feels very relevant for the current time:

'My child, quiet yourself in me. Don't worry. I've got you. This is a year to keep your eyes

on me. Watch me do what they say cannot be done. I will sweep away the clutter in your mind as you look to me. Am I your God? Then look to me and I will care for you. Let me reveal myself to you,' says the Lord.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Best wishes,

Revd Lynda Davies

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