Revd Karen writes…

Dear all

I am writing this feeling relaxed and refreshed after the school summer holidays, which we ended as a family by spending a week in the Austrian Alps. Although I’m still to be convinced by Lederhosen there are so many things that the Austrians do well: beautiful scenery, mountains, beer and chocolate being amongst them. However, one of the things I hadn’t expected was how visible and central Jesus is in their life. Wherever we went there was a beautiful carved crucifix with Jesus on it. Whether at the foot of a waterfall, at the top of the highest peak or in a restaurant, we were reminded about how Jesus should be part of and central to our everyday lives.

This sparked a conversation between myself and Revd Martin the other day when he asked me if I prefer to see an empty cross, or one with Jesus on it. As it turns out, this has been one of the first things we’ve disagreed on in the last two years of working together. There is obviously no right answer, but it is perhaps something that you might like to consider. Does seeing Jesus on the cross help by reminding you of the suffering he went through, as therefore providing reassurance that God understands all we go through in our lives. Or do you prefer seeing an empty cross, reminding you of Jesus’ resurrection and the hope that gives to each of us. Either way, I found the crucifixes in the Austrian Alps a helpful reminder that God is with us wherever we are and whatever we are going through.

As you read this, we will be in the heart of the Autumn term. Our lives will no doubt be busy once again and Advent is only just around the corner! However, before we start thinking about preparing for Christmas, we should take some time to settle in the season of Harvest as we celebrate it across the parish this month. Here we enter a time of thankfulness where we remember those working the land and providing for us in our beautiful rural community. It is also a time when we remember and are thankful to God for all He provides for us.

Last term in our schools’ collective worship I spent some time getting the children to think about how much we all really need in our lives, whether food, drink, money or possessions. We thought about the difference between want and need and how different the world would be if everyone had just what they needed. During our week in Austria, I read the book *“Less”* by Patrick Grant, host of the BBC’s The Great British Sewing Bee. He writes of how things have changed in Britain over the last few centuries; not all of these changes necessarily being good. Many of us have become used to having food items whenever we want them, regardless of whether they are in season or need to be transported halfway across the world for us to enjoy them. Fashion trends cause us to want the latest clothing and gadgets even when our wardrobes and cupboards are already full and we really don’t need them.

Think back to the Exodus Old Testament story in the Bible when Moses and the Israelites were in the wilderness for forty years. God provided manna for them, a bread which tasted of honey and fell from heaven every day. Each day there was always just enough for everyone and there was no need for the Israelites to take more than they needed. So, this harvest season I challenge you (and myself) to think about what we need rather than what we want, and to try and buy more from our local shops to support our community and small businesses. If you are able to help and support others, you might also like to consider donating some items for the foodbank this Harvest.

If you can join us for one of the Harvest services across the parish, or one of our quiz nights with fish and chip supper, it would be lovely to see you. Until then I will leave you with a couple of photos from our holidays in Austria, including a loaf of freshly baked bread that we bought - only to once again be reminded of God’s daily provision for us all.