



MAY'S PASTORAL LETTER

Greetings dear reader

We live on the entrance road to the Pavilian Park. One of the joys of living here is that we see so much of village life: football, cricket, tennis, children at play and of course the dog walkers. Occasionally I get to join them and chat all things dog as we walk. The reason I occasionally join the dog walkers is that our daughter has a dog and when she and her husband go away we are asked to have the dog. She is a delightful Cockapoo named Poppy.

Lately, I have been reading about domesticated dogs and especially the special relationship with humans. Apparently, according to Britannia, domestication likely began when certain wolves adapted to human environments, attracted by food scraps and safe habitats. Over generations, wolves with reduced fear of humans and heightened social intelligence were selectively favoured. This evolution was not solely physical; it also included behavioural traits such as tameness and an ability to interpret human social clues. One of the domestication traits of dogs is the herding instinct. We see this with Poppy – when we come in from a walk she keeps barking to get us all herded into a seated and therefore relaxed group. Only when we are all seated on the settee does she stop barking and settles down, job done.

I think Poppy and her herding have got something important here to teach us and that is the importance of social groups, most obviously family, friends and social networks. They cement social care and the support of each. We see this most obviously in family where each supports the other. Families are the mainstay of the fabric of society. However, for many they lack such support and life is lonely. Indeed, we are told that loneliness is one of the biggest problems in our western culture. Approximately 27% of adults in the UK reported feeling lonely some of the time with 7% stating they felt lonely often or always.

According to Government surveys, responders ticked 'yes' to the following questions:

Do you feel lonely?

Do you feel you lack companionship?

Do you feel left out?

Do you feel isolated from others?

I believe this is where the Church can step in to provide an antidote to loneliness. I've seen many folk come to faith through baptism/marriage/funeral ministry or indeed, the fellowship of tea and coffee after services. Many other things can provide such fellowship and you only need to read the range of adverts in this month's Parish Magazine. One can sample things from lunchtime concerts to cream teas and pancakes.

This all begs the question 'do you know anyone who is lonely?' Could you invite them to a church event or could you notify the office or one of the clergy of a need? If so, I guess Poppy would be proud of you!!!

by Rev'd. Brian Griffiths

