



# *Vision*-UPBEAT

July 2017

## Minister's Jottings

### **A WORD OF WARNING, 'Closeness to Christ could cause you be in turmoil and conflict'!!**

I have referred to the Screwtape Letters (C S Lewis) a few times in the three years I have been with you; a book concerning how the Junior Devil Wormwood has to work hard when his charges became close to the enemy of the 'Satan'; God. He had to call upon his mentor Uncle Screwtape for advice.

From first having a Damascus Road experience at the Swanwick Youth Conference in 1974, offering my life to Jesus I noticed that instead of things getting easier as so many 'saved and born again' people said it would, for me things spiritually became more difficult, a constant battle field. After seeking advice, I was told it was just the Lord's way of testing me; my reply was, 'Why'? I therefore spent many years doing my own thing which meant I was not often challenged!!

When I felt the call and received a new revelation many years later, similar battles started happening again. Whilst candidating for ministry, people gave the same answer; 'It is the Lord testing your call'. This time I replied, 'OK'.

But now I am not so sure that it was the Lord testing me or many others who were fighting spiritual battles. You see, there has developed a pattern over the years because every time I have been especially spiritually close, in harmony, totally reliant on my Lord, the battles, the obstacles, even people come and try to rip me away from that closeness with Christ. The strategies used are cunning, sometimes making me feeling low, or euphoric through praise, gaining material items, or loosing all the security I had. The list could go on, but the campaigns used are never seen but always felt.

So often Christians are Christian because of a habit of church attendance, rather than the faith through Grace given by Christ. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, where he talks of Spirit and flesh, yet the flesh is always around us, even if we do live in Spirit, the closer we get to Christ the more the flesh wants to recall us and re-own us for the darkness of this world.

I am bearing my faith on my sleeve as I write this. Since coming to the Pastorate, Christ Church and Burnham, I have been drawn closer and closer to Christ in Spirit; and as I have said above, I know what happens then. The spiritual, personal, theological obstacles and battles start trying to tear me away from this highly vulnerable dependence upon my Lord; the more he shows me a vision (of course to be tested and shared by those within the church,) the more the struggles between God and dare I say the agents of darkness, self-centeredness and the world try to interfere with that relationship.

I do not mean to say that people are signed up as secret agents, having sworn an official pact with the flesh, but a closeness with God leads to a tension equal and opposite to the relationship we have with Christ, and believe me things can be very uncomfortable. You could argue the further away from a close relationship with Christ one has the less one is troubled by these spiritual battles.

Thus I say, the closer we are with Christ, the less comfortable it becomes; the more we realise that we cannot fight alone the powers that would drive us away from this unique relationship that God wills us to have, the harder this world will fight for our spirit of allegiance to the flesh.

I know that I need your help as I continue to be drawn even closer to Christ; and the ministry I feel called to offer for however long, but likewise I want to support you who have those same battles raging because of your closeness to Christ, helping those to come closer to Christ and thus with their battles.

Maybe we will one day have a church where we all need each other's support and help to hold us in the Spirit, together with the Holy Spirit being strong enough to ride the dark storms, sharing a closeness with Christ that defeats the flesh which is the call of this world and it's would be master, Evil. It is hard, but in Christ's name and through the power of His Spirit uniting His people we can triumph for Christ. Please pick up the Bible and read the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul's letter to the Romans if you are not sure what I am talking about. I would be pleased to help you through the texts individually or in a group..

You will not very often hear me use such language, but I felt I wanted to share this with you.

Thank you in Christ's Name.

JON

# Christmas Tree Festival

SAVE THE DATE  
8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017