

## **A few words from the Vicar ....**

*O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the lord: praise him and magnify him for ever. (Benedicite, omnia opera verse 1, BCP Mattins)*

It seems a long time ago now since Polly and I crossed the Arctic Circle as part of our cruise along the Norwegian coast.

When most people seem to plump for some mid-Winter sun, it might seem a tad eccentric to head to the far North of Norway in February. Well, I don't mind cold weather (providing it is dry) so it was a good time of year to go. When going ashore we wrapped up well and wore snow chains on our boots, so we were never cold and coped with the icy conditions. Indeed, I had to smile when I saw the UK weather forecast (we had satellite TV on board); when we were there it was colder in the UK than in the far North of Norway.

We glimpsed the Northern Lights (a green smudge in the sky) and the scenery was stunning; fjords, mountains and snow everywhere. In the far north, around Honningsvåg and the North Cape, the conditions are so bleak in Winter that trees cannot grow there. Yet it is a place of beauty where it is sometimes impossible to tell where the snow covered landscape ends and the white sky begins.

Even in that area people make a good living; from fishing mostly as the fish are abundant there and, thanks to the Gulf Stream, Norwegian harbours remain ice free even in the depths of winter. A reminder that God has made us in such a way that we can thrive anywhere. 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. (Genesis 1:28)

This is beginning to sound like an advert for the Norwegian Tourist Board and I must admit, I do like Norway. I certainly plan to visit Norway again one day but there are also many other places on my bucket list too. God created a wonderful world for us to live in and, before I move on to the next one, I

would like to see a lot more of it. The Bible tells us that when he created the world and everything in it, 'God saw everything he had made, and indeed, it was very good.' (Genesis 1:31)

Well, who am I to disagree with the Almighty? There is indeed a sense in which creation praises God. Going for a walk and enjoying the countryside around Ainsworth, Norway or anywhere else for that matter, God's creation cries out to us and we can feel a closeness to God. I know I do.

Naturally we visited a few churches whilst we were on our Norwegian travels. One of the most unusual was in the town of Åndalsnes (about the same population as Ainsworth) where the local chapel is a converted railway carriage situated in a siding next to the train station. The chapel is left open for casual visitors and is well worth a visit.

Our attention was drawn to it by some fellow passengers who disclosed that they had visited the town about four years previously when news came through that a close relative had died. It was not practical for them to leave ship and return home so, coming across the chapel, they went in and sat down. It was a great comfort to them to sit there in peace and quiet yet I doubt whether the good folk who attend the chapel realise how much of a blessing they had been to that couple.

Of course, thanks to a group of volunteers, Christ Church too is open for casual visitors (Wednesday afternoons 2:30 – 4:00pm) who might wish to come in to pray or simply sit in God's presence. This is just one of the ways in which we seek to be of service to folk who live in this area or who might simply be passing through. Our beautiful churchyard, a haven of peace, is available for this purpose too.

So come in, sit down and feel close to God.

Every Blessing

*Dave*