

A few words from the Vicar

And the good news continues. The contract has been signed and the essential works to our church building begin in early August. Completion is expected in early October although, as with all building projects, one can never be certain.

Once the North wall has been stabilised and work on the tower completed, we can breathe a sigh of relief because the future of our homely village church will be assured. As for the rest of the things that need doing (more repointing, for example), these jobs are much less urgent and, so, there is no rush to get them done.

This also means we can focus more on improving the church sound system, which (I must admit) I find frustrating at times!

So, there is still plenty to pray about: for money to pay for an improved sound system; for money to pay for the other things we need to do around the church (a handrail along the path, for example); and that the build building work will go well. But we pray in the knowledge that God has already answered our prayers, and that God will continue to answer our prayers.

Did God answer our prayers? Well, yes, of course He did.

I have never known it possible to demonstrate cause and effect; we pray and hey presto! It doesn't normally work like that. God is not a genie who, if we rub a magic lamp, grants us three wishes! Rather, if we pray, then coincidences (God-incidences!) begin to happen.

In our case a lot of hard work went into fundraising and individuals gave generously. But then, also, the contract price was a lot lower than estimated by our professional advisors; out of the blue, we received a substantial legacy; our grant application to Viridor Credits went like a dream; and, over the years, the PCC set aside some earlier legacies and protected this money from predation (for example, we were never

tempted to use the money to make up the shortfall in the Parish Share we pay to the Diocese). A whole series of God-incidences, I think!

Sometimes, as we pray about what is on our heart, a frustration or situation maybe, it is us that changes. If we have fallen out with someone, we, perhaps, begin to understand things from their point of view or come to realise we are not entirely blameless, so reconciliation begins. Sometimes, we are God's solution to a problem and maybe we need to change our attitude or do something about it!

There is always a temptation to tell God precisely what we want Him to do for us. Although it is easy to fall into that trap, it is a big mistake. It is not for us to tell God what to do. He is not our servant, rather we are His!

God answers prayers in His own good time, not ours and He answers in the way He chooses. So, in prayer, patience and humility are virtues.

The important thing is to pray. Indeed, if we can do nothing else, we can and should pray.

And, talking of answered prayer, as I write, there is some more good news. For years we have included Asia Bibi in our pewsheets prayers. She is a Pakistani Christian who was falsely accused of blasphemy by Muslim neighbours and sentenced to death in 2009. After years spent on death row, last year she was acquitted but, owing to death threats from Islamist extremists, was taken into protective custody. Initially, the Pakistani government refused to allow her to leave the country, but Asia and her family are now safely in Canada.

Good news indeed!

Every Blessing

Dave