

Changing Times



These two dishevelled hens are going through their annual autumn moult. The one on the left has lost more feathers than the other. During the recent cold nights she has resorted to huddling next to her companion for warmth, instead of sitting alone on another perch. Their new feathers will keep them warm during the approaching winter. In actual fact, fowls lose feathers and replace them throughout the year. The moult in autumn is a heavy moult, a more dramatic change for some fowls than for others.

All of us are continually faced with changes in our lives, many over which we have little control. These include changes resulting from age, health, loss of family members and friends, the weather, climate change, technological advances, restrictions to control Covid-19 and so on. We can decide also to make our own life changes.

Sometimes we want to be left alone to drift slowly through life without any changes, but this never happens, and I suggest it is not the way God

works. In fact, I believe that God wants us to continually grow in God's love and life, both in this world and in the world to come.

At present, in the Anglican parish of Kempsey, we are in a changing time as our current locum is being replaced this month with a Priest-in-Charge. The diocese of Grafton is also involved in changing or restructuring to better carry out the church's ministry and mission. As a result, various parishes, including Kempsey, are grouping or considering to group together to assist each other to do God's work.

We can say that our nation and the world is now living through uncertain times and rapid changes. The current pandemic still continues with worrying variant forms emerging, and questions concerning vaccinations. Many people are living a 'new normal' with limited overseas travel and different ways of working and socializing.

In the Church's year, we are now in the season of Easter when the Bible readings are full of stories of change. For example: In Luke 24, the followers of Jesus are described as fearful and huddled together in a locked room in Jerusalem, and then being challenged by a risen Jesus to believe in the impossible, his resurrection. First the disciples were asked to believe the stories of the women, then the report of the two disciples who talked and ate with a stranger who turned out to be the living Lord. Finally Jesus appeared among them and they themselves saw his crucifixion wounds, and how he could eat fish and was not a ghost! What a challenging and exhausting day for them!

Later, in John 21, Jesus appeared to his friends on the beach in Galilee. This was where Peter had an opportunity to heal and deepen his relationship with his Lord who still loved him, although he, Peter, had denied knowing him.

As Christians, we are challenged to undergo changes in our relationship with God and with others throughout our lives. We are called to be members of the body of Christ, to become more Christ-like, sharing God's love and care with all God's creation, humans, animals, plants and earth. To do this, we are to be open to the guidance of God's Holy Spirit and willing for that Spirit to work in us and through us, changing us in

our prayer, words and actions.

One way we can be open to the Spirit is to deliberately stop each day, and place ourselves in the presence of God. During that time, whether short or long, we can be aware of God's love in and surrounding us, others and the world.

We are reminded in John 15:12, that Jesus commands us to love one another as he loves us. This is how we as followers of Christ are to love others.

When we have difficulty relating to certain people, it may help to look at others differently, not at their faults or what annoys us in them, but lovingly as God sees them. God loves all people and knows them through and through. People whom we know only superficially, may possibly be like us, at times struggling in dark or difficult places. They need our support, not condemnation or rejection.

All men and women are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we are to encourage and help one another. By seeing others as fellow children of God we are better able to love and care for them.

We can also choose to look at nature, God's creation, differently, wanting its well-being, and giving thanks for it. Not only does nature feed and protect us, but who is not uplifted and changed by a spectacular sunset or the affection of an animal?

Among the many things that are always changing in our world and in our lives, one thing that does not change is God and God's love. We have opportunities each day to allow God's love and presence to grow in our world through our prayer and in our relationships with one another. We thus open ourselves to God changing us and our world in these changing times in which we live.

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