

Words of Light and Hope from Muriel Rogers

As the sun sank slowly down to meet the sea I was seated in my usual place on the sea-wall, but today wasn't an ordinary day. As the sky darkened, lights slowly started to twinkle on the lower slopes of the mountains. Above the silence of the sea the fruit bats began slowly circling until the sky was dark with the sheer number of them. What was not usual was the flotilla of boats using the red and green lights of the marker buoys to find safe passage out of Suva harbour in Fiji on their way to Lebaka in the Lau group. The lead ship was carrying a very precious cargo, the body of Ratu Mara who was being taken home to his tribal lands where he belonged. (Ratu Mara was a paramount chief, the founding father of modern independent Fiji and would be sorely missed).

And there was the word - 'belonged'. I was on my own at the other side of the world far from where I belonged. I was a white woman in a very strongly patriarchal society but this week grief turned the world on its head. During the week-long state funeral, I had represented the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools and Colleges and been told I was also to represent the Pacific Conference of Churches. I had sat in prayer sessions respecting Ratu Mara and presented gifts. I had also visited with the Queen of Tonga who had come over to Fiji as she was a close friend of Ratu Mara. I had not been the white foreigner, I had been told I belonged, I was part of all the grief. Today I had sat on the ground in the street, one among many thousands lining the roads from the Government buildings to the park where the funeral took place. No-one is permitted to stand higher than a high chief hence everyone sitting on the ground - in total silence! Club-carrying tribal warriors with black painted faces guarded the coffin as it was pulled on a gun carriage.

Now, on my own on the sea-wall I watched as the last of the boats slid into the darkness and the final fruit bat disappeared. I was left on my own at the other side of the world contemplating the word 'belonging'.



REEPHAM & WENSUM VALLEY
TEAM CHURCHES

Pew Notes

Services for next week:

Monday 24th August:

12noon Porch Prayers, St Mary's, Reepham

Sunday 30th August:

10:30 am: Whole Benefice Holy Communion, St Mary's, Reepham

For more information on any events please see our website or Facebook page or contact Joy to be on our weekly newsletter.

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Email: Revd Nigel: revd.nigelkinsella@gmail.com

parishofficerwv@gmail.com to submit articles or join the mailing list.

FACEBOOK: Reepham & Wensum Valley Events

WEBSITE: www.reepham-and-wensum-valley-team-churches.org.uk

To contact the administrator Joy, please either email or call 07770672329..

Pew Notes are available to download from the RWV website

If you have any safeguarding concerns, please contact your Parish Safeguarding Officer. Details in the church porch or on the RWV website:
<https://www.reepham-and-wensum-valley-team-churches.org.uk>

Collect

God of constant mercy, who sent your Son to save us: remind us of your goodness, increase your grace within us, that our thankfulness may grow, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Isaiah 51:1-6

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. ² Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. ³ For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. ⁴ Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples. ⁵ I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. ⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats;^[a] but my salvation will be for ever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

Romans 12:1-8

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters,^[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual^[a] worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world,^[a] but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.^[a] ³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸ the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Matthew 13:13-20

¹³ The reason I speak to them in parables is that "seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand." ¹⁴ With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: "You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive." ¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them." ¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷ Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it. ¹⁸ Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

Psalms 138

¹ I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; ² I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.^[a] ³ On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.^[a] ⁴ All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth. ⁵ They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD. ⁶ For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away. ⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me. ⁸ The LORD will fulfil his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures for ever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Post Communion

God of all mercy, in this eucharist you have set aside our sins and given us your healing: grant that we who are made whole in Christ may bring that healing to this broken world, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.