

Elder's report

1 Corinthians 3 verse 9. ***In this work, we work with God, and that means that you are a field under God's cultivation, or, if you like, a house being built to his plan.***

Growth and opportunity, are words seldom used in a positive context these days. We too often hear of negative growth and no opportunity. These times of harsh financial trouble exposes and highlights the worst and best in human nature, greed vs generosity, self preservation vs selfishness. These in turn produce many social problems and pressures. Pressures without release valves have catastrophic and far reaching effects. Also some release valves only produce more problems such as alcoholism, drug and gambling addiction, and so it goes on to - break up and breakdown - It's true to say that the greater majority are probably not too badly affected but a smaller minority are affected to varying degrees.

As Christians these times show God our true heart as we seek to help and minister to those caught up in bad situations and impossible circumstances, which, are not in general of their own making and are way beyond their control. Many innocents are indirectly affected by the decisions and choices of others.

So perhaps this then is a time for positive growth and great opportunity in spiritual terms. I was thrilled and deeply touched by the generosity of all who gave and were involved with the Christmas appeal of AoK (Acts of Kindness). It was a great highlight of my year. Whilst returning the equipment back to the church after the Carol Service I observed that on both sides of the main hall building from one end to the other boxes of toys ready to be wrapped, not only that but the bungalow lounge was full of foodstuffs ready to be boxed with the toys and ready to be distributed to those in the community with needs. Many people are to be thanked and commended for organising this wonderful work. Pastor Robin worked very hard to make this happen with all the various agencies, councillors, retailers and traders. His heart is God's heart for this town.

Much too has been achieved through the hard word and commitment of the staff who serve in the shop in Winyates. Many lives are being touched, impacted and transformed by the love of God shown and given through this precious service. That is why it is so exciting to have the very real prospect of opening a second shop in the Woodrow Centre; Pastor Robin is working hard to make this opportunity a reality.

As I write songbirds in the garden are becoming more active and a robin has building material in its beak with a plan and expectation for the future. We too as we seek to build our new 'nest' can have that same expectation for the future. At the rate the new-borns are entering our congregation our physical building will need to expand, is this a sign from God? Are we to expect new babes in Christ?

These present times are tough on people not only in the community but in the congregation too. May we with God's love, wisdom and grace in us and round us pull together for the Glory of God and the expansion of His Kingdom, so that those who are lost and suffering won't hurt any longer than is necessary. Thank you all for all you do in His service and the service of His church in Redditch.

Thank you for all your love, prayers, support and kindness for Ellen and myself.

John Hill