

While our Rector David Tomlinson is on his sabbatical from May to the end of July 2019, Rachel Prior will write a Curate's Letter.

## Curate's Letter – July 2019

Dear Friends,

One of the things I enjoy most in curacy is telling stories. Godly Play is a way of using simple materials to tell Bible stories and to encourage people to wonder about what they have heard and experienced. Recently, I told the story of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments to a group of nine- and ten-year olds. One of the wondering questions went as follows: I wonder which of the Ten Best Ways we could leave out and still have everything we need? This set me wondering, which of the Ten Commandments do we act like we do not need...?



A YouGov Poll in 2017 asked Christians which of the Ten Commandments are still important principles to live by. Whilst six of the commandments were still seen to be relevant, the commandment that was most quickly disregarded was to Keep the Sabbath Holy.

In our culture, the message we constantly receive is to work hard and to play hard. So often our value is perceived as being in what we do, how good we are at doing it and how much we do it. Our economic worth seems to have become confused with our personal worth. And so, to be seen favourably is to be in perpetual forward motion. Even those who are retired often find their lives are very busy indeed: time spent volunteering, time on grandparent duty, and time spent serving in church. And the culture of busyness has also influenced the church; ministers often describe themselves as busy and find themselves comparing how busy they are to one another... It makes me wonder: are we so afraid to slow down?

In this hubbub, stands God's commandment to observe a day of rest. Keeping a Sabbath is a radical, countercultural idea. The Sabbath was not intended to be a day where we did all the household jobs, completed all the too-easy-to-forget errands, and ran around appeasing our family members. Rather it was intended that preparations were done in advance, so that the Sabbath could be a day of reorientation – a time where we reorient ourselves to God, the source of all life and love. The Sabbath is a time to worship and to rest in a way that restores us: whether through being outside in creation; through being creative, or through spending time with those we love. As we slow down, we will come face-to-face with the fact that the world turns without us. In other words, when we keep a Sabbath, we are reminded that we are human, not divine. In this pause, we are transformed, and it is out of this transformation that we are empowered to do our work for the week.

I wonder which of the Ten Commandments could we leave out and still have everything we need? Perhaps keeping a Sabbath is a key to giving us exactly what we need. I wonder what we would learn if we took God's command to keep a Sabbath seriously?

With love,

Rachel

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