

## **Our Lenten Journey**

I chose as our Bible reading the well-known passage from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 55.5-12) not simply because of the reference to snow, which I thought was particularly apt given the extreme wintry conditions of the last few days. It was rather because of the helpful reminders it offers for our thinking on peace and reconciliation as we continue our journey through the season of Lent.

We are reminded above all of our mission to the world, of our call to spread the good news of God's word to those who have not heard it. We are reminded of the call to turn from evil – and there is much that is evil in our world today: violence, terror, oppression, exploitation, inequality, hatred and prejudice. These may be human failings but they are far removed from God's ways. For God's ways are goodness, holiness, justice, forgiveness, peace and love.

God's will for humanity is joy and peace, not fear, despair or conflict. That is the goal to which we are called to aspire and to work. Of course as Christians we need to start with ourselves. And that is where Lent helps as a time to take stock of our lives, to listen to God through the Bible and in prayer, to grow in our love and trust of God, that we might seek to live better lives following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beyond that as both a Church and as individuals we need to make known God's love to the whole of his world. We need to show that there is a far better alternative to the violence, cruelty and selfishness that we see in so many parts of the world. We need to proclaim a message of hope. We need to point to the goodness that does exist even in the midst of conflict and suffering, the many acts of kindness and generosity that are performed, often quietly and unnoticed.

Such was the context of Isaiah's words of comfort in our Bible reading, looking forward to the restoration of Israel following destruction and exile. And there are surely many parallels with situations in our world today.

At times hope may seem extremely difficult, if not impossible. Yet hope is necessary if life is to be bearable. Hope gives us a vision of a truly meaningful and genuine existence. Hope encourages us to persevere. It enables us not to give up. For God who is the ground of our hope never gives up on humanity. His love, his pardon never ceases. And for that we give thanks.

2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018  
Kingsley Boulton