

The Revd Jonathon Green

Foxhill 50th Celebration

July 2019

Let us pray:

Through the written word,

and the spoken word,

may we know your Living Word

Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

'That's one small step for Man, one giant leap for mankind.'

For a certain generation we can clearly remember the grainy pictures and our parents and family watching with astonishment.

Whilst the world was focused on the Moon and Houston, this was not the only small steps happening at this time, the day before some other steps were being taken.

Foxhill House was opened and dedicated to the Glory of God.

A place thousands of visitors have visited over the years, with the guests taking further steps in their walk with God.

Today we are gathering to mark and give thanks to God for the past 50 years, for the generous gift from Dr. and Mrs. Pilkington, the vision of Bishop Ellison, and to Bishop Peter continuing the vision of the past years.

To all those who have faithfully ministered here over the years.

For those who have renewed their faith here or found a new direction in their journey. It is amazing to hear the stories of guests who have visited Foxhill over the years and had a clear call to a new vocation.

I have had the privilege of meeting four previous wardens, starting with Chris and Jean Sayers who started here at Foxhill at the same time as I was Manager of Whirlow Grange in Sheffield.

Each one has brought their gifts to Foxhill.

It is a pleasure to have Helen Thornton join us today; her remarkable ministry here is still remembered with great love and affection.

Our gospel reading from John is the well-known account of Jesus and the woman at the well, a passage of scripture which has been very much a part of our vision here at Foxhill over the past few years.

Foxhill House is built around an internal well.

You can see it if you go into the cellar and stand in front of the heating control panel, which I am sure was used a prototype for those early space explorations!

As you stand in front of the controls you are standing on a slab which is directly above the well.

Whilst the water from our well has not be drawn for a considerable time, those who have visited Foxhill over the years have taken of the water of life which Jesus speaks about.

Jesus promises to be a well of life to all who come to Him. Our commitment has been, and is, to be a place of refreshment, restoration and renewal for all who visit us.

The woman realized the gift of living water and then went to tell all to whom she met. Foxhill as a place of Prayer, Study and Mission tries to live out the this image as people come to pray, to learn and reflect on Gods word and then be envisioned to go forth and tell the wonders of this living water.

This account of the woman at the well and our reading from Isaiah is very much like those who visit Foxhill, people like you and me on a journey.

Foxhill is a place where we can pause to look to and listen to God.

Verse 3 in our Isaiah reading clearly asking us to stop and incline an ear and to listen to God that we may live, to enjoy the precious waters of life.

We experienced this with the encouraging success of the Stop, look and Listen Days in 2018. We are now reflecting on the psalms in a series of days called By Still Waters, a mini retreat for those who want to take time out.

We all get tired and thirsty at times, both spiritually and physically, and needing to pause to find refreshment.

At Foxhill we seek to meet physical needs too, with a recent visitor commenting that by the time they got to my office they had been offered four cups of tea!

The last verse in our reading from Isaiah is a powerful testimony to the ministry here over the years. *You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.*

This has been and is a powerful illustration of what has happened at Foxhill over the years, day by day we see guests encounter Jesus, the water of life, in a new and fresh way and leave with joy and peace in their hearts.

So today we are giving thanks for the hospitality which has been and continues to be practiced in this place;

A School group on a visit here recently asked

'What is hospitality?'

John Chrysostom said*Hospitality is a divine movement...a movement outwards...not a bribe or linked to an advantage*

Human hospitality re-enacts God's hospitalityshared meals together.

Hospitality is a Divine mystery whereby the host receives more than the guest.

Hospitality becomes for the Christian community a way of being the sacrament of God's love for the world.

I know all these quotes have been visible at Foxhill for the past fifty years.

I was recently asked what we will be doing at Foxhill in the next decade

I believe that as we look to the future we can only do one thing as our role ministering here at Foxhill but also as we go about our daily lives in the world.

To look to God.

I am reminded of the reading by King George the 6th, nearly eighty years ago in his broadcast to the nation. A reading which had been given to him by his 13-year-old daughter, Our Queen Elizabeth.

Entitled 'God Knows'

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

May this be our prayer as we take the ministry of Foxhill forward together into its next decade trusting God and encouraging all who come to this place to experience the living water of Jesus.

Amen.