

Dear Friends,

### 'Journey of Life'

As many of you will know, our 'Snodland Stones' prayer walk is a set of eight stones placed around the edge of All Saints churchyard, each engraved with a traditional symbol relating to the Christian Faith. They were initially installed during the summer of 2014 and have been used ever since by both groups and individuals as an aid to prayer and personal reflection.

Recently we have been incorporating them into an exciting new educational programme called 'Journey of Life', part of the Activity Plan developed in conjunction with the Heritage Lottery Fund urgent repair project. Year 6 children from four of our local Primary schools will be participating during the course of the summer term. The programme is designed to enable children to explore the idea of Christian pilgrimage and to reflect upon their hopes and fears as they contemplate the next stage of their own personal journey to secondary school. These two strands of 'journeying' will be weaved together in what we hope will be a morning of stimulating, interactive activities designed to help them process their feelings and anxieties about 'big' school and set them in the context of their ongoing spiritual 'journey of life'. If time allows, we hope to offer a similar morning or afternoon of prayer and reflection for adults later this summer.

The idea of life being a journey is a familiar one. In the Bible we have the story of Abraham called to leave his home in the city of Haran, and of Moses and the Israelites journeying across the desert to freedom in the Promised Land. These are not just physical journeys but spiritual ones too. Christians often think of themselves as 'pilgrims' or 'strangers on a journey' (Heb.11:9-10). Journeying implies the need to 'move on', to leave the familiar behind, venture into the unknown, and encounter fresh (perhaps quite difficult) challenges (Mt.7:13-14).

Significant spiritual resources can be required: courage for example, and perseverance.

"No-one who puts his hand to the plough and keeps looking back," Jesus once said, "is fit for service in the kingdom of God".

Just as a ploughman must keep his eyes and his mind fixed on where he is going if he is to plough a straight furrow, even so those who wish to follow Jesus must remain focused on Kingdom priorities.

We need, like the ploughman, to be clear about where we are going! To quote an old Argos poster I once had as a student, which did not make complete sense philosophically, but which nevertheless had a point:

'If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else!'

Many simply follow the crowd, assuming that everyone else must know where they are going and have their goals and priorities all sorted. As a result they drift through life, only realising what is truly important to them when it is too late. Taking time out, therefore, to reflect upon and pray about the direction our life should take, the challenges we may face and the resources we will need, is really important. The gospels speak of Jesus doing just that, before the start of his public ministry (Mt.4:1-11), when he was about to choose his twelve disciples (Lk.6:12-13), prior to his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk.14:32-42), and at other times too (Mk.1:35; 6:46). It is an example we should all perhaps try to follow.

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