

Dear Friends,

There are so many signs all around us of coming towards winter. The leaves are falling off the trees and blowing around the ground. The clocks have gone back, and the temperatures are dropping. The shops are full of things to make us feel cosy, with throws, blankets, candles or whatever it might be. We are all different and our reactions to the changes of seasons will vary.

There are many paradoxes at this time of year, it seems to me. November is a time where we begin the month by remembering people and historical events. In the church year, we are starting to look ahead with hope to the coming of Jesus. It is also a time of recognising that the seasons are slowing down, ready to go into hibernation. At the same time, for so many people beginning to think about preparing for Christmas, this is the opposite speed of that of creation. It is a time where we need to find a place of wholeness and comfort.

We don't have to look far to see that the recipes and food in the shops are all about comfort food. We will all have a different understanding of what we think comfort food is, but it is about eating and feeling a sense of contentment and wholeness. The best comfort food is that which gives us a balanced diet of many different nutrients.

When we think about contentment and wholeness in our spiritual lives, we may well find ourselves turning to prayer and our relationship with God. We seem to have been in an exceptionally busy season and maybe we don't feel the wholeness we would like to feel. If you were to think of your prayer life in relation to a balanced diet, where would you place yourself? Is it in the fast food category or grab and run, a quick snack, or taking the time to go think about what you were going to have, buy the ingredients and then cook a wholesome meal?

In the paradox of the world which is slowing down and hibernating and the speed of life which seems to be particularly quick at the moment for so many, where are you and where would you like to be in relation to your prayer life? If there's a mismatch, how can you change this? To push the metaphor of the idea of comfort food, what does a wholesome prayer life look like for you?

Maybe it is a brisk walk out kicking up the leaves, or maybe it is to spend some time with Jesus sat cuddled under a blanket with a cup of hot chocolate. Whatever works for you, my prayer is that we will all find the time to stop and find comfort from Jesus, to have some quality time with God and to allow the Holy Spirit to refresh us.

God bless,
Chris