

This is one of a series of my reflections based on the banners that are hanging in St Peter and St Paul's Church, Aylesford. There are 8 banners:

GOD Listens GOD Enables
GOD Loves GOD Provides
GOD Creates GOD Encourages
GOD Cares GOD Lives

Other banner reflections will follow, but in the meantime a printed version of the series of reflections are available in the church.



GOD CREATES

How often have we said: “things aren’t what they used to be?” Referring to Cable TV’s channel of 24 hours weather a day, comedian Don Spencer once remarked, ‘we had something like that where I grew up. We call it a window!’ Technology, 24hours a day makes the world go round fast and each year it seems to go round even faster. Computers, for example, affect every aspect of our lives, able to achieve almost every task, yet still able to provide for amusement, frustration and lots of stress. I am reminded of the joke: “Thank you for telephoning the technical helpline, if your computer becomes obsolete while you are waiting, please press 1 for our sales department!” As American Mike Shapiro once commented, “Exactly when was it that the greeting, ‘have a nice day’ was replaced with ‘please visit our website’.”

Change is sometimes frightening, we often don't like it and we resist it especially if we feel it is unnecessary and unhelpful. Sometimes it happens frighteningly fast, sometimes it is so gradual that we hardly notice it.

Some of the biggest changes have been in our food supplies. For a long time we have been into the age of containerisation, refrigeration, instant TV dinners, pizzas delivered to your door and the fast food takeaway. Things have long since changed from the early harvest and Rogationtide celebrations. However these times are (as are many others) still opportunities to thank God for his creation, for everything natural even if, as it seems, we have taken control of everything from the field to the supermarket shelf and even the front door. Our prayers are to give thanks but also for a much more equal worldwide share of our bountiful harvest and of God's wonderful creation.

We must not miss the opportunities to look at the much bigger picture. Genesis 1:28 reveals a pecking order where humans 'have dominion over' plants, animals and the environment. Why shouldn't we use the earth and our technological capacity to the full? Don't we owe it to everyone on the planet? The full context of the verse, however, lies in the statement that God created humans in his own image. For Christians the only true image is that of Jesus Christ. The nature of this dominion must therefore be reflected in Jesus and his sacrifice on the Cross. Paul summarises in his Letter to the Colossians: through Jesus Christ God chose to reconcile the whole universe to himself.

In the Book of Revelation John sees a door standing open, in heaven. He sees through it to the living God with all creation paying homage. But there is something strange. Sitting on the throne is one with a sealed scroll, God's plan for recreating the universe. Somebody has to open it but nobody can. There, present was a lion and a lamb. And it was the lamb that opened the scroll. It seems so hard to understand as we look at the destructive, messy part of God's universe we call our world. Nature can play a devastating part as we have seen so dramatically in floods, hurricanes, tsunamis and disease, but we have manipulative powers over it that we can almost create life and so easily can create death. We have an uneasy relationship with our environment as seen by the big problem of climate change.

Yet Easter claims a message of a new heaven and a new earth joined up all because of the lion who became the lamb who then opened the scroll – God's plan for the universe. And then, John writes in the Book of Revelation, that every creature, from penguins to peacocks, guinea pigs to gorillas, eagles to elephants, every angel, man, woman and child, all sang an amazing song of praise to the lion who is now the lamb, the lamb who wiped away all tears and turned them into incredible songs of praise.

What an amazing picture of God's creation! How much does this picture pale our fast changing technological world into insignificance? Whatever we think of our changing world we know that God is working with it. There is so much

evidence of his presence, everywhere. The beginning of Psalm 19 reminds us: "How clearly the sky reveals God's glory, how plainly it shows what he has done; each day announces it to the following day, each night repeats it to the next. There are no words, no speech, no sound is heard yet their voice goes out to all the world and is heard to the ends of the earth."

As we look at the Cross we begin to make sense of our lives and our world. At the Cross God's eternity breaks into OUR time, our suffering, hurting, grieving world. God's love may be felt here. We have this to be thankful for and this hope sustains us in our faith. In the Book of Revelation we have a resource for seeing God's ultimate purpose in creation of heaven and earth. Let us thank God for his awesome creation and ask for him for a new understanding of his power and a wiser, more equitable use of our own power and division of the wealth in the world. Because in God's bigger picture we are useless until we believe that we are strong when we are weak and we can heal when we are wounded and hurt. Only through our weakness can we follow the Creator Lamb whose hands we are in the care of today and forever.