

Thoughts from the Manse 25th September 2020

This year has been different for many reasons and Covid 19 has meant many changes to our normal routines. For many changing or cancelling holidays has been a reality. Holidays are important, for some people a holiday means going away somewhere whilst for others it means not working but whichever, it should mean a change to your routine, an opportunity to relax and to experience something different. Even before Covid 19 the word 'staycation' had been introduced to the language which somehow implies that a vacation or holiday had come to mean going abroad and staying in the UK was a substitute. I would disagree with this as our home countries have much to offer and can even offer good weather. With climate change, even going abroad does not necessarily guarantee the weather you are hoping for or expect.

Some people cannot afford a holiday, and this has always been the case, but a change of scene, even if still working offers a change of routine. Many are the families who travelled to Kent for the hop-picking season, staying in temporary accommodation often very basic but offering a change of scene, fresh air and space for children to run safely. A working holiday is not that unusual even today.



When we lived in Essex we were involved in Scouting and the Scout District formed a link with the Netherlands, a limited company running a former youth facility in Zeeland as an International Scout Camp. For eight years, we went there for two weeks each summer to help with the catering and the odd jobs. We had little money, and this enabled us to offer our girls a change of scene and the experience of another country. It became home from home and we usually managed a short time each day for sightseeing, shopping, or a picnic on the beach. We took the girl's bicycles and Norman and I borrowed bicycles from the camp, and we cycled along cycle paths to the nearest towns. There are so many stories and memories of that time which has become very special.

We have stayed with family, mainly in Scotland, and there have been occasional holidays away with family. Perhaps our most memorable holiday was just before I began training for ministry. Money was still tight, but we manage to do a mini tour of Europe staying in rental caravans, near Paris, Lake Garda and in the Jura mountains. I cannot remember the exact mileage, but it was approximately 2500 miles in 15 days, I was the sole driver. The journeys were adventures also, particularly when the exhaust went on the car and we had to find a garage and explain what the problem was with only school French to help. We visited Euro Disney, took a train into Paris, took the cable car up Monte Baldo, drove to Venice hiding from hailstones the size of golf balls on the way, visited the ice cave at Chamonix, drove through the Mont Blanc tunnel, visited Geneva, Lausanne and explored waterfalls in the Jura Mountains, so many memories.

We had more caravan holidays later, mostly going back to the Netherlands. When we moved to Somerset, we were able to explore Cornwall and fell in love with the light, the atmosphere, and the beaches. Visiting the Lizard is an essential of any visit to Cornwall as it is so peaceful and largely unspoilt unlike Lands' End. Day trips to Bude were also a treasure, sitting above the beach at a surfer's café enjoying Chilli and Chips. Exploring is a large part of any holiday, whether abroad or in the UK, it is the chance to dig under the surface and find your own special places. Whatever, your holiday preference, this year will have been different, but rather than seeing it as denial why not view it as an opportunity, and if you cannot go far, remember a picnic in the car, with a good view is still a change of scene.

