

Thoughts from the Manse 15th January 2021

I have been reflecting recently on sounds which provoke emotions. We each have different emotion triggers, but sounds are a common trigger. A sound can instantly take us back to another time, and they can be quite innocent sounds. I have heard that for many who lived through the war the wail of a siren, whether an air raid or emergency vehicle, became a trigger for alarm or fear. As a child in the sixties, I lived through the Cuban missile crisis and remember the practice sirens for the four-minute warning and I know the apprehension we all felt, even as children, at that time.



Music and songs can be triggers for many people, inviting a foray through dusty memories, making connections, and remembering friends and family. It is not about favourite music but something deeper, something subconscious, a particular song makes a connection. Many years ago, I was giving a talk at the church fellowship group and decided to do my own 'Tracks of My Years', picking two memorable songs for each decade, songs which told something of my story. One or two of them were, I realise now, connectors but the majority were simply songs which illustrated part of my story. So, what are some of my triggers, music which is embedded within my emotional story?

Dad bought our first record player in 1962, around Christmas time I think, and one of the first LP's



was a Jim Reeves Christmas album, I think almost everybody had a copy, but one track 'Silver Bells' is embedded, when I hear it or even think about it, I am transported back to that time and happy memories of childhood. Another trigger is George Harrison's 'My Sweet Lord', which I bought as I revised for O-levels and played almost non-stop, then there is Rod Stewart's Maggie May, I am not a fan of Rod Stewart but this song was in the charts when we went on a school ski trip to Austria with another school, one of the other school was

called Maggie, she was not terribly popular and the song became a theme tune of the trip. It was a great trip with lots of happy memories of new experiences and of shifting from childhood to adulthood.

Nature can also provide sound triggers and for me the strongest trigger is the sound of rain rattling against the window, it is a sound I love and which strangely, brings comfort. This is wrapped up in the many hours we spent in the family caravan, rain has a special sound when you are inside a metal box. As the rain rattled on the caravan, we would be cosy inside, reading books and playing games, we felt safe which is why I think that sound brings me comfort.



This got me thinking about how I would describe other weather sounds – the rattle of rain, the silence of snow, the wailing of wind, the hammer of hail, the song of sun. The last was the most difficult as there is not really a sound of sun but when the sun is out somehow nature seems to sing, birdsong, the hum of insects, maybe even the background noise of music played outside.

Not all triggers are 'happy' triggers, and we can be taken back to a time of fear, as with the air raid siren but recognizing that is important for only when we recognize the trigger can we begin to



understand the emotion and whilst it is an important part of our emotional story, recognising the trigger for what it is, a trigger and not the actual event, is an important step in putting things into perspective. Triggers that connect to happier events can bring comfort and joy and help us to build our emotional story, which is an important aspect of our life story, it explains why we are who we are.

Why not spend some moments thinking about your triggers, what they are and why? You may discover something long forgotten or something of which you were never consciously aware.