

This year has been quite a year for anniversaries. 4<sup>th</sup> August sees the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the first world war and 3<sup>rd</sup> September will be the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the second, but one which was most in the news this year of course was the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D Day on 6<sup>th</sup> June. There were ceremonies and commemorations not only in France at the landing sites and D Day memorials but at the embarkation ports and many other places in Britain and Europe. Some of the most touching images we saw were of the very few survivors still alive who were at the commemorations in Normandy as they were presented with flowers by local school children. Stories of the day included accounts from soldiers and others from both sides of the conflict. Watching and listening to them I was reminded of a story from 10 years ago at the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary about the Normandy veteran who 'escaped' from his care home to board a ferry and join the celebrations in France. His exploits went global and he was acclaimed as a hero all around the world, including Germany, now no longer the enemy.

It has been quite a summer for sport too. In football, at the time of writing, England have just defeated the Netherlands to get through to the final of the Euros, Andy Murray has gone out at Wimbledon, the Tour de France is underway, we have the T20 Cricket World Championships going on, and the summer rugby internationals. Despite national allegiances, and with the possible exception of football, these are all events which bring us closer together. As sportsmen and women and their supporters travel the world enjoying the hospitality of the host countries and giving hospitality in return, it is a tragedy that there are still so many conflicts and issues that keep us apart.

In the Ukraine, Palestine, Syria and the Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and so many other places in Africa, Asia and around the world communities are still being torn apart by extremism and terrorism, with so many complicating factors including political ideologies, religion, tribal or national identity, and history. This year over half of all the democracies in the world are holding major elections and in many of them far right and nationalist groups and political parties are gaining ground. Despite a Labour victory it is a trend which we have seen ourselves in our own recent elections. In such turbulent times we would do well to remember St. Paul's words to the church in Galatia, 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:28).

Learning to live together is a major part of being a Christian. It means looking back to what Jesus did and taught but mostly it means putting those teachings into practice and living in the now, being part of the community, looking after each other, displaying Christ's love and setting an example for those around us. It is very important that we don't separate ourselves from the world around us but live as part of it showing our love and concern for all. We have a responsibility to the communities in which we live, to be aware of what is happening and to be involved in it. And in a world which is increasingly interdependent, where events and attitudes have global repercussions, it is now more important than ever that we make our voices heard and that we proclaim Christ's gospel of love.

Janet.