

Dear friends

It doesn't seem possible that September is upon us already and summer is rapidly becoming a distant memory. As we look around we see that the fields and trees have changed from vibrant greens to rich golden yellows and the local farm workers are busy on their tractors working well into the night in order to bring the harvest in before the weather changes. Many of us will be looking back with fondness at recent memories of family holidays which took place just a few weeks ago. Meanwhile, the local children are just setting out on a new academic year, for some this means starting a completely new school or moving on to college or university, for others it is getting to know new teachers in the same school. All no doubt will face the next few weeks with a mixture of nervous excitement as they set out on the coming year.

This time of year is definitely one of endings and beginnings and we recognise and celebrate this in many ways in our churches. Battle of Britain Sunday see's us remembering all the young men who fought in the skies above us all those years ago so that we can enjoy peace and democracy today. We give thanks for the Harvest safely gathered in at our Harvest Festival Services, recognising the skills and hard work of all those who work on the land and also the gracious generosity of God in making the place where we live so fertile.

But we are equally aware, that for many, September is yet another month of "the same old same old thing". The world we live in often seems unrelenting; people work long hours and hold down several jobs and, thanks to the joys of modern technology, often find they are on call 24 hours a day – the result for some is little respite and rising stress levels. For others who find themselves without adequate employment there is the constant worry of how to provide for themselves and their families. While for some, often the older (but not always) residents of our villages, there may be the ongoing battle with loneliness or ill health.

The chances are that if you, or someone you know, fit into any of these categories you will feel completely hemmed in by your situation - almost imprisoned by it with seemingly no way out. The Bible is full of accounts of people in seemingly hopeless situations, Joseph (of the technicolour dreamcoat) who was sold into slavery by his brothers, the children of Israel who endured slavery in Egypt, numerous times we read of the psalmist at the end of his tether and of course, how about the disciples on Holy Saturday having just witnessed the death by crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Yet for each of these people, and the numerous others throughout history who have found themselves in a similar situation, God has provided a way out. And he promises the same for all of us. It might not be the way that we think, but he does promise to open the door to a much better a fuller life – all we have to do is go to that door and invite him to open it for us.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to know more, or simply come to one of our special services and see how God's presence is affecting so many others for good this September.

Wishing you all a Blessed and refreshing September

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Iona". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke above the letters.