

Dear Friends

As I write this letter the Commonwealth Games have just started. It's known as "The Friendly Games" and I can certainly see why because it has a very different feeling to it than the other major sporting competitions. There is a real sense of camaraderie amongst the competitors – regardless of nationality they are representing, and you see them all going around congratulating or commiserating with each other after a very good or possibly disappointing performance. There are some who we know are unlikely to win a medal – but simply competing against some of the worlds elite and doing their best is enough to bring a great smile to their faces.

There's also the inclusivity of these games – competitions for able bodied and disabled taking place alongside each other. While the variety of different sports is amazing, from Rugby sevens to Crown Green Bowling, Squash to clay pigeon shooting, swimming, athletics, cycling – you name it and it's there with people of different ages, skills and abilities all doing what they do best to ensure that this is a great games.

Then on top of all that there are the back stories that lay behind some of these competitors that make this competition so special, like Anna Hursey the table tennis competitor who, at the age of just 11 years, will become one of the Commonwealth Games's youngest ever competitors, and the youngest to represent Wales. While at the other end of the age range is 79-year-old Robert Pitcairn will be the oldest ever competitor at the games when he represents Canada in the full bore rifle shooting. While Andrew Newell who is representing his parents homeland of Jamaica in lawn Bowling must surely be a contender for the prize for the athlete who has shown the most determination to get there as he first had to first set up the Caribbean island's national association as well as the first lawn bowls facility. The stories that the many different competitors from around the commonwealth bring with them to the games are individual and astounding and just go to show that although only a few will go home with a medal – each and every one of them is a winner by just being there.

St Paul talks about running and athletics several times in the Bible – he says that our journey through life is like running a race. For example, in 1 Corinthians 9 verse 24 he says "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize". To be honest that might give the impression that access to "the prize" is limited to only a few people, however I don't agree with that and I certainly don't think the competitors at the Commonwealth Games would agree either. It's the race itself and how we run it that really matters. Yes, it's important to keep our eyes on the goal and give of our best in order to get there. But a good athlete will also be very much aware of all the other competitors – where they are and how they are doing – they will also have got to know them before the event and will recognise when they are in good form or whether they are carrying an injury.

In the same way, as we travel through our "race of life" we need to remember that we do not journey alone. Alongside us will be countless others, each running their own often very different races which are in accordance with their own special abilities, aptitudes and stories. And just as in the "Friendly" Commonwealth Games we see the various competitors encouraging and supporting each other, so are we called to help, support and be moved by all those around us and to let them help and support us too.

However, there is one other thing that we should have in common with the competitors of the commonwealth games. That is the need for a good coach to help train us properly. It probably wont come as any great surprise to read that I believe that we all have access to the best "life Coach" ever - Jesus Christ. He is standing right beside each and every one of us, wanting not just to cheer us on but to actively help us to the winning post.

So, if for some reason you are finding life difficult at the moment, if you are feeling you are getting nowhere or might have lost your focus in life, please do consider looking to him for help and advice. We in Church will always be happy to point you in his direction and make the proper introductions.

With Blessings for the coming month.

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