

Dear Friends

As I write this letter our yearly round of Annual Church Meetings has just come to an end. For anyone who isn't aware, these are very important events where we look back over the previous year in order to take stock of what has happened, elect our Church Wardens and others to the Parochial Church Council and Deanery synod and then possibly think about the future. Anyone on the Church electoral role is entitled to come along, vote or speak at these meetings. Others are welcome to attend provided they don't interfere with proceedings.

To be honest these meetings usually go off without a hitch or any interference from unwanted sources. However, some of those present at the East Sutton recently noticed that there was an uninvited visitor who really did detract from the seriousness of the occasion. A bat, who towards the end of the proceedings, started flying around the chancel. Although we had seen evidence of them being in the church before, this was the first time that many of us had actually seen one flying around.

This reminded me of an incident that happened a great many years ago when I was much younger. It was an evening similar to those we have just experienced. My sister Nikki and I had gone out for a walk to a local pub. It was still light when we started back but the evening was beginning to draw in as we retraced our steps across the fields and under a very high arched railway bridge. It was as we approached this bridge that the unthinkable happened. We realised that there were several bats flying about underneath it. Or at least Nikki realised it. Now you have to bear in mind that my younger sister is far more impressionable than I am – and she used to spend much of her time watching Hammer Horror films or reading novels of the same genre – so obviously she knew beyond a shadow of a doubt what Bats are capable of, even if they are circling a good 20 feet above you.

I tried everything I could to get her to continue, reason didn't work, gentle persuasion didn't work, neither did a spot of anger or an attempt to physically drag her through. It was only after about 20 minutes that it dawned on me that I was now as terrified of the creatures as she was and the decision was then made to retrace our steps and walk the long and very unsafe way back home along the windy country lane, (in the pitch dark). Although I would normally have no problem with Bats myself, Nikki's reaction definitely affected me that evening.

Well, that must have been about 40 years ago – but it got me thinking. What affects our behaviour in the world today? Do we ever find that we get swept along by the irrational fears of others? Either those around us or those stirred up by the media? Do we find that such fears stop us doing what we want to do or even what we know we should do? Indeed, do they ever cause us to behave in ways which we know are not good? Or, what may be even worse, are there ever times when our own behaviour has an adverse affect on those near to us?

However, this doesn't need to be the case – just as negative fears and feelings can have an adverse affect on others so, I believe, can peaceful and positive feelings have a good affect on those around us.

In particular, it's good to remember that Jesus told his disciples "*peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*" John 14:27.

This peace was not left purely for the disciples who were with Jesus 2000 years ago, he has left it for anyone who wants it at any time. He promises to be an influence for good in all our lives and in all aspects of those lives.

Please contact me if you would like to more – I will be only too willing to explain.

Wishing you all a very peaceful and Blessed June.

A handwritten signature consisting of a curved line above the word "Love" written in a cursive script.