

Pastoral letter 4th February

Dear friends,

There is something very calming I find in watching and hearing the birds feeding on my newly erected bird feeding station in the back garden here at the Rectory. Every morning they seemingly are waiting in the trees and bushes around it, the blackbirds whistling in eager anticipation, as I walk over the lawn to fill it up.

As I sat eating my lunch a couple of days ago, looking out from the conservatory, the birds were taking their turn to see what goodies they themselves could have for their lunch. Suddenly, I got a very real sense that I was being watched! You might know the feeling when you sense someone's eyes looking at you. It was then that I noticed them; two large goats and a small dark coloured pony, in the paddock behind the Rectory garden. They had their heads resting on the fence, and were looking directly at me as I ate my lunch. As I looked at them they had quizzical looks on their faces, wondering maybe who I was or if they'd seen my picture on our website, what on earth was the Rector doing? I went out to say hello but once they had had a good look at me and maybe even saying to themselves, 'nothing more to see here', they nonchalantly nodded at me and wandered off to another part of the paddock.

A great blessing I'm finding since moving into the Rectory are the opportunities and space for contemplation that present themselves daily, that by being surrounded by countryside bring. The natural world, be it in the smallest bud just beginning to form or the snowdrops breaking through the ground or even the spring flower bulbs gradually emerging, gives to us a very real sense that we are moving towards a new season. Maybe not just a new season literally but also metaphorically. We've not of course yet seen the back of winter, but there are glimpses of the feeling and signs of spring hope on the horizon.

Watching and listening to the birds on my back garden have brought to me times and space to be simply still, with opportunities to not just look but also to see and not just to listen, but also properly to hear. My encounters with the goats and the pony also brought it home to me that by being at times still and quiet we also encounter not just nature, but also maybe God in a whole new way.

Love & prayers,

Revd Neil

