

Dear friend

One of the readings for yesterday's morning prayer was from 1 Samuel 5, where we are told about the ark of God being captured by the Philistines and taken to Ashdod where it was placed in the house of Dagon, the god of the Philistines. You can read for yourself what happened, but I was reminded of a tale I was told while I was training (by Andrew Nunn as I recall) when I read the passage

'This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not step on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.'

Andrew spoke about a new curate who was instructed, while processing into a church, to stop at a certain point and bow. 'Whatever for?' asked the curate 'What am I bowing to?' 'Well' came the response, 'many years ago there was an icon there placed by the then vicar of the parish and it was his habit to stop and acknowledge it when entering the church!'

Habits can be hard to break. And the problem with habits/traditions that relate to things that have no relevance to today's world is that it is pretty much impossible to explain them to people new to worshipping God, and particularly to people new to our church.

Right now, worship is changing to ensure that we are all as safe as possible from this virus. And for some considerable time to come, there will be practices in place that will seem strange to us, let alone any visitor. How important it is then, that we display a willingness to put people at their ease and explain what is happening – perhaps more so than at any other time. When this is all over, we will go back to some sort of normality in our worship when some of these temporary practices may be able to be dropped.

I look forward to the day when we can share Psalm 126 with the joy that so obviously emanates from its wording:

1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter
and our tongue with songs of joy.

3 Then said they among the nations,
'The Lord has done great things for them'

4 The Lord has indeed done great things for us,
and therefore we rejoiced.

Stay safe & may God bless you this day

Linda