

Dear Friend

I am writing this a little early as I am taking a short break from work at St Matthew's. My church work has been pretty continuous recently with two and half years at St Andrew's and then all of the pandemic period at St Matthew's. It's been interesting but I now feel the need for time to refresh and a change in routine.

At the end of the school holidays, it is good to reflect on the need for a break in our usual routines. Have you changed your usual routine this last month or so? Have you been away or just fitted in a few visits to friends and family? We are now able to travel without too many restrictions so it may be that you have seen people you haven't been able to talk to face to face for a long time.

It's certainly true that we value things more when we have to wait for them or fight for them. Many people have found out that the important things in life are not things at all!

The Bible tells us that God worked on the creation for six days and rested on the seventh. The Old Testament mentions the rules for resting on the Sabbath many times. Jesus puts a twist on this, as on many other things. In Luke 13, we hear that he heals a woman and is ticked off by the leader of the synagogue for healing on the sabbath. He says that the woman could come on any of the other six days to be healed. But Jesus calls them hypocrites. He gives an example of their taking their oxen to have a drink on the sabbath so isn't it right that the woman, a daughter of Abraham, should be freed from the bondage of her sickness?

I don't think many housepersons or care givers would find any problem with Jesus' reasoning here! However, as humans we all need some "down time" – time to walk in the garden, think things over, meditate, do something completely different. We all need to refill our energy tanks so that we can have enough strength, both physical and mental, to do all the things that we are called to do.

I hope and pray that you have all had some chance of refreshment in the last few weeks. Maybe you will be doing that in the next few weeks to avoid the crowds. But whatever your plans were or are, let us thank God for his mercies:

Loving Lord, thank you for holiday times and the wonder and excitement that they engender in all our hearts. We want to praise you for all the goodness and grace you generously pour out on us and all people. Especially, we thank you for the many blessings we gain from these important holiday times, when our inner souls can be refreshed and rejuvenated. We also remember those who are alone, or ill, or going through times of stress or difficulty, and pray that you will draw very close to each one of them. Amen.