

Dear Friends,

I wonder if you remember autograph books. Some may even still have an old one. Maybe it is valuable and contains sought-after signatures. For most of us the precious autographs will be those which are irreplaceable at any price because they were written by people who influenced us or who were dear to our hearts and are no longer with us. I recall asking visiting preachers for their autograph assuming that they must be very important, a practice which now seems quaint. I remember on occasion standing outside the players entrance at Dean Court, where the Cherries played, as my companions approached Bournemouth players to sign their books or programmes. On leaving Junior School it was *de rigueur* to have an autograph book for one's classmates. Signing other pupils' shirts was not an option. If you had an autograph book, perhaps you can remember some of the inscriptions. My favourite was, '*the future lies before you like a sheet of driven snow, be careful how you tread it, for every step will show*'.

Hebrews 8:10 reminds us of Jeremiah's words often read at our covenant services: *I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts*'. In Hebrew poetry ideas are repeated in parallel phrases, so here heart and mind convey the same meaning. Jeremiah's original version is *I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts*. The New Covenant is not the abolition of God's Law, but the internalisation or absorption of God's Law into our deepest character through the transformative indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As we live according to His love, so we '*show that the work of the law is written on (our) hearts*' (Romans 2:5). Paul goes even further and declares to the Corinthian Christians, '*you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*' Romans 2:15

I wonder, what will we be writing via the 'letter' of our lives in 2022, and whose signature will it convey? God bless you richly throughout the coming year.

God bless you,

Keith

Keith Beckingham, Superintendent Minister.