

Dear Friends

I recently visited a gentleman who wanted to talk about his funeral...not that he is expecting that any time soon! Interestingly, although he hasn't lived in the city of his birth for many, many years and has lived in some very exotic locations throughout the world, he wants a song all about his home city to be played at his funeral. It reminded me of the importance of place. It reminded me that somewhere on my bookshelves I have a book entitled 'The Christian Theology of Place' written by John Inge, the Bishop of Worcester.

We all need a place to stand but we don't always reflect on how much effect such places have on us. I believe that I was fortunate to grow up in the foothills of the Pennines. Wherever I went in the town I could see the moors, as we called them: from the house where I lived, from the schools I attended, from the streets, avenues and lanes where I walked. High above the town, and visible for miles around, is a curious tower called Hartshead Pike. It was built to commemorate the wedding of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark and to honour Queen Victoria. When I see that curious tower, I know I'm home! I'm sure that most of you will have places in your lives which are very much part of who you are even though you may have left long ago and not been back for many a year.

In the recent past there has been a 'loss of place' in the experience of many people. We have become a much more mobile society. No longer do families live within driving distance, let alone walking distance. Some of our families are spread throughout the UK, others are spread across the world. In the process of this change we have tended to downplay the importance of place. However, in the pages of the Bible and in Christian tradition place is important. Think of the Emperor Constantine at Milvian Bridge, John Wesley at Aldersgate, Paul on the road to Damascus and Moses and the burning bush.

In the final chapter of his book Inge comes to the conclusion that if we were all able to rediscover the significance of place, vital aspects of our humanity would be restored. Place is important both in the here and now and in eternity. As the bishop reminds us: Jesus implies as much when he tells his disciples that he is going to prepare a place for them. And hopefully for us!

Blessings, Allan

### **Resources/Good News**

#### **The Lunar New Year**

Lunar New Year is spectacular, loud, and for many cultures across Asia the most important festival of the year. The festival begins on the first day of the first lunar month in the calendar and ends with the 'Lantern Festival' on the 15th day. The date of Lunar New Year differs every year. In 2024 it occurs on 10 February.

The [Royal Museum Greenwich](#) has a very interesting webpage full of history, facts, videos and resources.

