

Stepping into the light



Gracious Lord, turn us back from judging others and open our eyes to inequality and prejudice. Grant us the confidence to step out in Jesus' name and bring all on the margins, in the shadows, into the generous light of your love. Amen.

Richard Greatrex *reflects on* Numbers 11:4-6. 10-16. 24-29, James 5:13-end and Mark 9:38-end

Moses, struggling with the responsibilities of leadership, is frustrated with the demands of Israelites unhappy about their desert rations. God's response is not to accede to their requests immediately, but to provide Moses with a leadership team. Seventy elders are chosen to share the burden, but when a further two men play a prophetic role it causes friction because they are perceived to be outside the authorised coterie. Moses' response is to commend these two for taking on the weight of God-given responsibility.

His position is reflected by Jesus, when he is confronted by John's remark that the disciples have attempted to stop someone outside the circle of official

followers from doing good works in his name. John is, perhaps, trying to deflect attention from Jesus' previous statement concerning children being full members of God's family. In the disciples' world, children are "non-persons": like the lone healer (Mark 9:38), they are "not one of us".

However, Jesus has come to break down such boundaries. In God's kingdom children are of as much value as adults; outsiders are equals with the long-term faithful. Moses discovers the strengths of a leadership team, while the letter of James suggests that the Church is more effective when labour is shared. Yet Jesus goes further, challenging us to see God at work in everyone, irrespective of their place or status in society. ☺

World Tourism Day

by Lisa Tulfer

In Genesis 2:2, God rested after the work of creation, and the holidays we all enjoy reflect this divine example of taking our leisure after strenuous effort. Until 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic saw a global downturn, the tourism industry had been expanding for six decades, due to cheaper transport, labour laws which introduced paid holidays and a growing worldwide middle class. Before 2020, tourism directly employed ten per cent

of people on the planet, with many millions more owing their livelihoods to it. It is an important driver of economic development and a major employer of young people, migrant workers, women and those in rural areas who would otherwise have to migrate to find work. Heritage and conservation rely heavily on tourism revenue.

World Tourism Day, marked tomorrow, raises awareness of tourism as a way to bring people of the world closer together in peace, understanding and celebrating our common humanity. ☺

“You can do very little with faith, but you can do nothing without it.”

Samuel Butler (1835-1902), English author

Baptism

Part III – *beginning a journey*

by Heather Smith

Journey is an important image in scripture and for many biblical characters a journey is preceded by God's call. Moses is called to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt, Abraham responds to God's call to leave his home.

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey within God's family. A journey generally requires preparation and the Church of England Liturgical Commission's

(www.churchofengland.org) reflection on baptism sees the Christian journey as no different. To help create a supportive and rounded preparation, it suggests a set of activities that could take place within services in the run up to and after baptism. In the weeks immediately preceding baptism, candidates, or their parents or sponsors, could be given Jesus' Summary of the Law, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed and the Beatitudes. These bring a new emphasis to the importance of baptism, to the welcome into the community of Christ's disciples and to the beliefs, responsibilities and support that will form part of the journey. ☺