

A few words from the Vicarage ...



The Autumn Fair will soon be upon us – doesn't time fly? To think that autumn is here already! That said, it has been a grand summer insofar as the weather has been concerned and I hope that it has set everyone up nicely for the work ahead. Now is the time when we may all get back to normal – whatever 'normal' may be.

To mark the occasion my 5 years in ministry here on 22 September, we were delighted to be joined by The Dean of Blackburn Cathedral, the Very Rev'd Christopher Armstrong. Sadly, due to his wife's ill health, our Patron, James Hilton, was unable to be with us but it was good to see many of our friends from the parish help us celebrate this occasion.

This last month, Elizabeth and I have had the added excitement of venturing behind the *Iron Curtain* for the first time! Although the curtain itself has been open for some time there was still a lot of general uncertainty surrounding Russia and that heightened our concerns, if not suspicions, of what we may find.

I am glad to say that all was well and our concerns were unfounded. We had a wonderful time visiting some of the wonderful buildings; buildings once only dreamed about or seen in films and television. Places like the Kremlin Palace in Moscow and the Hermitage Museum and Peterhof Palace in St Petersburg.

It was particularly intriguing to meet the people – the ordinary citizens who have jobs and worries just like anyone else; and to try to get a sense of what their lives are like compared with our own. When we scraped off the veneer of our own anxieties and, perhaps, theirs too, we found that underneath there are huge similarities – after all, we are all part of the same creation. The Russian Orthodox Church is alive and growing, having survived years of oppression under the

Communist regime and so we pray for them and for their future. The Anglican and Roman Catholic churches also have a presence which is also encouraging.

Of course, we have our own struggles for survival as a church and, despite not suffering under anything like the past regimes in Russia, we need to pray for our own future. This is why we need to strengthen our resolve to work together as a church family; this is why the MAP process is so important; and this is why we need to pray for ourselves and each other as we look to the future with vision and hope.

God bless you all,

Your Vicar,
Fr D.