

Thoughts on Life and Faith – August 2017

As I write this I have just returned from Colchester General having had the plaster finally removed from my leg. I broke my ankle very badly in May and for nearly 7 weeks I haven't been able to put any weight on it. Other than short distances hopping (on the wrong leg!) with a frame, for the rest of the time I have needed to be in a wheelchair.

It has been a very eye-opening experience. I am not used to the vulnerability I have felt when to attempt the simplest things is either impossible or takes great effort. I'm not sure I like to be dependent on others – I am used to being the helper not the helped. But dependent I have been and I have had to accept the help I needed.

I, of course, am fortunate. It will still be many weeks yet before I can walk properly but I am expected to be able to do so eventually. For many who find themselves in a wheelchair or indeed with another kind of disability, it is permanent. And I have had much time to reflect on the way we treat the disabled and the facilities that are provided.

As I have said, I find it hard to ask for help. I don't think I'm alone. If that help is not forthcoming, then it is harder to ask again and many will not do so. It may be for access to an event or a building, it may be the need for a disabled toilet or a hearing loop or larger print books, or simply a desire to join in with what others take for granted.

In many ways, I think it is too easy to pay lip service to regard for the disabled. Because to really care requires us to go the extra mile – to make sure our disabled facilities in public buildings are what they should be, to make available the larger print books, the ramp that is needed, the lift to be offered etc – not with any great fanfare but simply because we value all people whether they are disabled or not – to make sure that those who are disabled are included - always. After all it was Jesus who taught us to love our neighbour – to go the extra mile – to care for those in need - to treat others as we would be treated.

So, thank you to those who have helped me in so many ways. Thank you to those who have fought to improve disabled facilities and thank you to those who notice those who need a helping hand but who don't want to ask. And I just hope and pray that, as a result of my broken ankle, I will in the future show greater understanding and awareness of the difficulties so many face, day after day.