

Dear Friends,

Since we moved to Winterton, our dog (Ruby the Golden Retriever) has become a bit of a Houdini! During the first week she managed to sneak under the hedge to join in a game of football at Winterton Rangers. During the second week she decided that our neighbours vegetable patch was an interesting place to visit. Despite trips to B&Q for extra fencing wire and efforts to block up potential bolt holes, she is still determined to make an escape bid – as if the garden weren't big enough for her to enjoy!

We've tried to get into canine psychology to attempt to understand why she has suddenly become a Houdini dog. Could she:

a) want to make her way back to Birmingham?

Let's hope not-it's a very long way away!

b) think that all of the places she can get to from our garden are 'her territory'?

The manse is new to her and she is not familiar with where its boundaries are.

c) just want to explore?

There are so many new sights, sounds and smells to savour!

Are there any parallels for us as individual disciples of Jesus and as church communities beginning to escape some of the confines of 'Lockdown' type restrictions and occasionally being pulled back again. As individuals and churches we have found that many of our usual freedoms have been limited in recent months but, at the same time, we may have discovered new aspects to our relationships with God and with one another, not to mention new aspects of technology (Zoom etc). An urgent question in these times is the question of whether we are open to the Spirit's prompting to explore fresh possibilities. Are we, like our dog Ruby, ready to risk an adventure into new territory when catch a whiff of something interesting?

Our dog is clearly reluctant to be constrained by barriers/fences and the like. God's kingdom is not to be constrained by the limits of church walls, of 'the way things have always been done' or of our imaginations. Let's 'Stay Alert', not only to limit the spread of the Corona Virus, but also to the new directions in which God's Spirit may lead us. We don't have to be Christopher Columbus to be an explorer. As the prophet Isaiah reminds us:

'The Lords says:

"Do not cling to events of the past,

Or dwell on what happened long ago.

Watch for the new thing I am going to do.

It is happening already-you can see it now!' (Isaiah 43 v 18)

With prayers and good wishes as we take this journey of discovery together,

Rev Vicki