**The Diary of a Prodigal Parishioner 2: Decluttering**

Sue Young

I continue with my New Year’s efforts to reduce my waste and my impact on the environment.

My green recycling bin is often heaving with paper and cardboard. We are blessed in this area with the local tip, a favourite haunt of mine (all rather sad really) which can accommodate all kinds of waste, including reusables, textiles, and books. I intend to do more of a recce there on a future spring day, as I sense there are other opportunities there than I am aware of, to recycle domestic refuse with some degree of purpose.

Close to home, junk mail clattering through our letterboxes can be restricted by contacting the mail preference service (www.mpsonline.org.uk) I feel saddened on a daily basis that seldom do I see friends’ handwriting in the mail (people don’t write letters any more) instead I am told that I can acquire cut price/unbelievable value aids for ageing householder (how do they know that fact I wonder?) Restricting this deluge of unwelcome spam is on my lengthy ‘to do’ list. In the meantime I search for a useful home for my old newspapers - a dog kennels perhaps.

Waste of course isn’t just food, and my ongoing need to declutter at home reflects my prodigal nature. Not being a minimalist by nature suggests that my living space could be positively seen as cosy, homely even. More truthfully I am in need of a radical declutter throughout and an ongoing assessment of real ‘need’. Perhaps my clutter is not mostly waste but can be reused or up-cycled (I am not totally sure of this term, except that I know it doesn’t happen on a bike).

Starting with my bathroom seemed the easiest place in the house to start, but led to several recycling dilemmas! Half empty, dried up creams and potions, old sun tan lotions bottles, even Johnathan's old (pre beard) shaving equipment (hiding in a drawer) and several old, unused towels. The latter can be cut up (using pinking scissors to stop the fraying) and become flannels or larger cloths for my daughter for her rapidly growing puppy (thus simply shifting my extra clutter into their house). The old containers can be rinsed out and recycled, but not the aerosol (watch this space for advice). However the shaving kit carried emotional baggage of sorts, and was thus has been re-sorted into a memorabilia drawer from the past, in danger of becoming the depository for my ‘do not know what else to do with it’ but ‘can’t throw it away’ belongings.

In preparation for reducing my clothing waste and remembering what Jesus told us about the unimportance of worrying about what we wear, I have started knitting again. Not alpaca wool (which is expensive and I don’t yet keep them in my garden), but wool remnants from years of knitting baby blankets for new grand-family arrivals, which I am now knitting up for scarves for those in need this winter. The gentle, pastel baby colours may not be age or sex appropriate for their current use, but at least will shelter the wearer from inclement Yorkshire weather.

In terms of repairing worn items, having forgotten my Mother's patient teaching from over 60 years ago, I watched a YouTube video on ‘darning’. Socks are relatively cheap these days and I wondered if repairing them was cost (or emotionally) effective? However I viewed it as a challenge and darned my toe hole, with some difficulty.

Sadly, as I type my toe is poking through again; my cat has found and partially unravelled part of the half knitted scarves and finally become firmly entangled herself in the pale pink wool remnants.

Other dilemmas facing this green fresher? My new kitchen caddy for waste, and garden compost bag, arrived promptly courtesy of Amazon, submerged in vast layers of bubble wrap, paper and a box several times as big as its contents. It will need to be crushed to go to the tip, and I need to drive to get there, another energy use paradox. The light garden waste bin continues to blow, currently virtually empty, round outside, chased at times by my pink woolly cat, who will however at times stabilise it from careering around the garden, by choosing to sleep in it

I see others stumbling blocks ahead on this journey for the prodigal parishioner and novice environmentalist, but I shall soldier on. My grandchildren, as do *all* of Gods precious children, deserve to inherit an amazingly beautiful world, which our Father has bequeathed to us all.