

19th April 2020

Plans

“I have a cunning plan.”

Richard Curtis and Ben Elton

Baldrick's habitual overoptimistic promise in *Blackadder II*

In the corner of our garden, there's a little clump of bluebells that isn't supposed to be there. The bluebells have grown through the gravel beside our garden bench. It's not what we had planned at all.

They've appeared at the foot of the down-pipe from the guttering above. If you follow the pipe upwards, it goes through the overhanging eaves before it connects to the gutter. At the back of the pipe, under the eaves, there's a starlings' nest. We heard the birds chirping outside our bedroom window after we moved in. They come back every Spring. But a starlings' nest in our eaves wasn't in our plan either.

In his book, *Six Crises*, Dwight D Eisenhower, US President from 1953 to 1961, attributes this line to Richard Nixon: *In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.*

Many of us in the current battle with Covid-19 have had plans that have gone awry: holidays cancelled; selling a house put on hold; planned surgery postponed indefinitely; celebrations in church and community deferred. And there will also be things will have happened that weren't planned for – like a blackbirds' nest and bluebells in unexpected places.

We're now realising that plans change. Some of them will turn out to be quite useless. That's hard to bear when we've come to expect things to go just as we want. But let's keep planning for what happens when all this is over. Let's not put our lives on hold. Planning is still indispensable, for we all need something to look forward to, don't we?

A prayer for today

*Living God, you give us time, but not years; hopes and dreams, but not certainties.
Help us with our planning, and give us patience when our plans are useless. Amen*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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