

19th January 2021

Shivers

**“The bleak wind of March made her tremble and shiver;
But not the dark arch, or the black flowing river.”**

Thomas Hood, The Bridge of Sighs

The “bleak wind of March” caused Thomas Hood’s heroine to shiver. But for *me* shivering comes from little furry creatures, and *not* just in March!

My recent stories of dogs and cats have prompted tales about some *other* household pets. A budgie story – one minister being attacked by a free-flying, *kamikaze* budgie every time he went to visit a housebound couple. A goldfish story – “But I *told* my daughter the minister would know what to do about a funeral for her pet fish.” And guineapig and hamster stories – and *that*, folks, is when I start to shiver! It’s the thought of little furry creatures, *anything* small and unpredictable – guineapigs, hamsters, mice, white rats, gerbils ... Oh goodness! I don’t know *why* I’m telling you this! Even writing the words down is giving me the heebie geebies.

We were once asked to look after two pet hamsters for our friends’ children when they went on holiday, Vladimir and Hamilcar – that’s the hamsters and not the children. Cute? Maybe. But for a whole weekend I refused to go into the living room while the monsters were there.

I don’t know where my aversion to small furry creatures comes from, and I’m disinclined to try to work it out. It would mean more shivers, and I can do without that. So I’ve learned to live with my dislikes.

Self-knowledge is important. Some years ago, when certain things were troubling me, I worked with a Counsellor to help sort them out. That didn’t mean I had a problem or that I was unwell. I was simply getting to know myself better and learning to recognise the influences that shaped me. Childhood, parents, workload, calling, role-models were all explored, to help me understand who I am and why I react to things the way I do. It made me a better person, and, I believe, a better minister too.

Did we explore my aversion to little furry creatures? No need! There were more important things to look at. Vladimir and Hamilcar would just have to wait their turn. Maybe one day ...

A prayer for today

Lord, you know me better than I know myself. I hope I’ll catch up with you soon. Amen

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