

25th February 2022

Flowers

**“Consider the lilies of the fields. They neither labour nor spin.
Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory
was adorned like one of these.”**

Bible, Matthew 6:28-29

In all the time I've been in the manse on Islay, I've never bought flowers. I like flowers. But I'm not inclined to buy them for myself. Imagine the delight, therefore, when, during my wife's stay, she was given a bunch of flowers from one of the churches I was preaching in. Please note: *she* was given flowers, not me. A point to ponder, perhaps? But, for a while, there were flowers in the manse. "Not even Solomon in all his glory ..."

The tradition of flowers which have adorned our churches being given to folk afterwards will be familiar to many of you. Organised on a rota basis, flowers placed in the church in memory of a loved one or to mark a particular date, are then given away. Bereaved people, those who are sick, the housebound, a family with a new baby, even the minister's wife on occasions, all benefit. What has brought beauty to the sanctuary, now brings beauty into someone's life and home. The goodness is shared beyond the church's walls. Quite simply, the Church is sharing its love.

A tradition, a routine, a gesture of good will, the Church giving itself away. A small thing? I don't think so. I once visited a church member who'd been housebound and unable to get to church for a decade or more. Frail, elderly and with poor mobility, she asked me if I would fetch something from her bedroom. It was in the top, left-hand drawer of her dressing table, just where she'd said. But beside it was a bundle of small cards, credit-card sized. I had a quick look. They all had the church's name on them and "Best wishes and prayers" from the congregation – cards which had accompanied the delivery of the church's flowers.

When I returned, the lady asked, "Did you see the cards there?" When I said I had, she told me how much she appreciated the regular delivery of the church flowers. "There are twenty-three cards," she said. "That's a lot of pleasure, and a lot of love from your church, laddie."

A lot of pleasure, a lot of love. "Not Even Solomon in all his glory ..."

A prayer for today

The gift of beauty, colour and life in some flowers – and perhaps even in me.