

26th February 2023

Lights

**“May you grow up to be righteous,
May you grow up to be true,
May you always know the truth
And see the lights surrounding you.”**

Bob Dylan, *Forever Young*, from *Planet Waves*, 1974

Some years ago, I was at an open-air concert which began in the early evening – in daylight – and, as the twilight deepened, ended in complete darkness. The stage was lit, of course, so that the performers could be seen. But the audience was in the dark. Towards the end of the concert, we were all invited to get our mobile phone out and switch on the “flashlight function.” By the time I managed to do that and wave my torch above my head as instructed, the whole place was filled with hundreds of other lights, all being waved back and forth, twinkling together in the darkness. Of course I knew that there was an audience around me – I remembered that from when I could see them all. But now I knew, *really* knew, that I was surrounded by lots of people, because I could see their lights shining around my own.

In any enterprise, including in Church life, if we are committed to our task, it’s as if we are holding up a light and letting it shine. Jesus said, if you have a light, you don’t cover it up. You put it on a lampstand. You let your light do what a light has to do – shine brightly – because of what you believe in. But sometimes it feels like you’re the only one holding up a light – or, at least, that’s the way it’s been for me on occasions. Then, amazingly, you look around and there are other lights shining around your own, dozens, even hundreds, of little lights like yours, which together have created a display of wonder and delight.

Bob Dylan suggests that to be “forever young” (and, I suspect, continuing to be enthusiastic about life), you have to see the “lights surrounding you”. As you’ve fiddled about with your “flashlight app”, and you’ve even wondered whether holding up your light is actually worth it, be aware of the other lights around you. Know that together, with all the lights that are challenging the darkness, the whole arena of your life, and your world, can be transformed.

A prayer for today

Lights – “You in your small corner and I in mine” – together, challenging the darkness.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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