

12th March 2023

Lasting

"I have made a monument more lasting than bronze."

Horace, *Odes*

As I watched some church folk arrange the flowers that had bedecked our sanctuary for worship, carefully preparing bouquets for distribution, my mind went back to an incident in my parish ministry.

I was visiting an elderly church member, who, because of increasing agoraphobia, hadn't been able to leave her house for several years, far less get to church. So, the Church came to her, and, on this occasion, I was the one to take the Church to her home. To be honest, it felt like a bit of a chore. I'd spent time with her often before, and this time I would no doubt hear all the stories I'd heard – at length – on many occasions. It was a "duty visit", with no real pleasure attached to it for me – or so I thought.

Pastorally, she was well supported by her elder, a succession of ministry and diaconate students, several assistant ministers, and me. And, of course, she was a regular recipient of church flowers. I'd often wondered whether offering flowers as part of our pastoral care was of any lasting benefit, other than the pleasure of the flowers for a few days before they withered. But this time, I had a stark reminder of the importance of this simple and regular act of kindness.

During the visit, the lady asked me if I would fetch something from her bedroom: "Dressing table; top-drawer; left-hand-side; blue box," she instructed. So, I did as I was bid, and when I opened the aforementioned drawer, I found, on the *right*-hand-side, a bundle of cards with our church logo on them, about twenty or so, all dated, all saying "A gift of flowers from your friends at ...", and all tied together with a little red ribbon. Should I have looked at them? Maybe not. Was I amazed that she'd kept them over all the years? Absolutely. Was I learning a lesson about the importance of these simple and regular acts of kindness? You bet I was.

This Sunday, why don't you share this story with the folk in your church who "do the flowers". When the flowers have faded, the lasting effect of the church's care will not die. You have proof if you need it that, as the Roman poet, Horace, tells us, in our care for one another, we can create monuments of love more lasting even than bronze.

A prayer for today

Lord, your Love lasts. So perhaps a little of ours can make a lasting difference too. Amen

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