

31st January 2024

Effective

"Truth is great, and its effectiveness endures."

Ptahhotep, *The Maxims of Ptahhotep* (2350BC)

Watching a Scottish Cup football match on TV recently, I was so unimpressed by the game that I took to watching the changing electronic advertisements round the pitch. Two of them took my fancy: firstly – *Seneca, Hair Restoration*; secondly – *CT1, The Number 1 Sealant & Adhesive*. I wondered whether the two might be connected. But then I found myself pondering, more seriously, how the PR people, or the companies being advertised, measure the effectiveness of the advertising. Number of enquiries? Organising a survey? Market share? Who knows ...

How do *we* measure effectiveness? So much of what we do, especially in Church life, has no obvious, measurable outcome. We can get dispirited by that, of course, as we're left wondering whether all the outlay and effort were worth it. Seeds sown, but no signs of growth? It's hard, isn't it. And then I remembered a story a minister once told me.

At the first meeting of a Communicants' Class, the minister was asking folk why they'd come. The response of one of the ladies was memorable. "When I was in Primary School, the school minister came to do assemblies. One day he told us a story about a wee boy. I can't remember the point of the story, but when our teacher asked us later to do a picture based on any story we'd heard, I chose the one the minister had told, because it was fresh in my mind. My teacher liked it, and suggested the minister might like to see it. So, the next week, I gave it to him as a present. A few days later I got a lovely letter, hand-written, it was, the first letter I'd ever had that was addressed to me. It said thank you. It said I was kind. It said I was a special. And at the end it said, 'God bless you.' I found that letter a few weeks ago. I've been struggling recently, but when I read 'You're special' and 'God bless you', I wept buckets. So why am I here? If I'm special, I want to find out what 'God bless you' means."

Effectiveness? I'll bet a jobbing School Chaplain wondered about that regularly, as I've done often enough over the years. So I say to that unknown and unheralded minister, as sincerely as I can – your ministry *was* effective! For God had blessed *all* you had offered in His name.

A prayer for today

Lord, help me to be faithful in sowing the seeds, and leave the growth to you. Amen

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