

18th March 2025

Together

“Remote fountains are of little help to nearby fires.”

Han Fei, *Tzu (Volume 22)*

In 2019/20, I was looking after two small churches in East Lothian as they looked for a new minister. The Covid-19 pandemic started to take hold at the start of 2020, and the first lockdown was imposed in March that year. The church folk had a decision to make: how to support each other and continue the nurture of Christian fellowship if the church buildings were closed. There was no “live streaming” facility. “Zoom” was but a vague concept. And Broadband in that part of East Lothian was rubbish anyway.

“I can prepare some thoughts,” I suggested. “Maybe weekly. I’ll send them by email. You can pass them round.” The weekly concept quickly became daily. The archive of my published material I was going to draw upon soon gave way to new ideas. The email list got bigger. An on-line platform was set up. The pieces were posted in various Facebook Groups. The first of these was sent out on 18th March 2020. So today, a “Thought for the Day” has its fifth birthday. For five years it’s been a regular feature of my life, and, remarkably, is now a regular part of the life of many others.

That first “Thought for the Day” told the story of an American soldier, based in Sweden in the 1960s, who was amazed to find himself sitting next to King Gustav Adolf VI on a cross-town bus. A soldier and a king were on a journey together, each one surprised to find they were accompanying the other. But it was being together that mattered, regardless of their status in life, their roles and responsibilities, or their place in society.

This togetherness has been the motivation of my “Thought for the Day” pieces during these past five years. Common thoughts, concerns and questions; universal anxieties, doubts and fears; collective joys, reactions and feelings. If being separate from one another is as useful as a remote fountain in tackling a nearby fire, through the communication networks available to us, the people who read my “Thought for the Day” pieces are never remote from me, nor I from them. We are together! We are as close to each other as a king and a soldier on a cross-town bus, worrying, struggling, laughing, wondering, crying, travelling together.

In five years’ time? God willing, we’ll still be beside each other on the same bus across town and maybe have a tenth birthday to celebrate.

A prayer for today

Together with each other, together under God, together in love. Amen