

**St Mary-the-Virgin Church, Great Brickhill**  
**Annual Church Meeting, Tuesday 30th April 2019**

**THE RECTOR'S REPORT**

(See the accompanying file with the Presentation of Slides shown  
at the meeting:- four slides in Item 8. "The Rector's Report")

**(SLIDE 1) "The Resilient Disciple" by Justine Allain Chapman**

Each year, during Lent and Advent, I try to read a book of spiritual reflections. I often don't finish it – things tend to be a bit busy! But I always get some useful insights.

This Lent, I read (part of) this book – I was intrigued by the title – it is a series of daily reflections on how we can let God be at work with us in and through challenging times, so that they may become times of growth and hope.

**(SLIDE 2) Kintsugi – the art of repairing with gold**

A central image in the book (reflected in the cover design) is what is called 'kintsugi', from Japan, which means 'joining with gold'. The story is that when fragile and precious bowls were broken, the tradition developed on repairing them with gold, not to mask or cover up the damage, but to honour the history of a precious object, and even to make it more beautiful in a new and different way.

**(SLIDE 3) John 20. 19-20**

**19** On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

**20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

On Good Friday I spoke about this gospel image – that the risen Lord still bore the marks of his crucifixion. Those scars were not wished away, or covered up, but honoured and transformed in the glory of his resurrection.

**(SLIDE 4) 2 Corinthians 12. 9a**

**9** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

The context for these words is that Paul is reflecting on what he calls his 'thorn in the flesh'. We don't know what exactly that is, but Paul writes that he has pleaded with God to take it from him, but instead he received this word from the Lord.

This speaks to me, in our struggles with our home situation as we live with Pauline's disability. And I would like to thank you again for all the support and understanding we receive, with people's support in prayer, and all the practical help that people continue to give us in many ways. In this way we receive many gifts and blessings.

So, in all this, we may all find encouragement in our journey of faith, and in our church life together – the promise that by the grace of God, we may discover God's strength and hope even in those very places where we feel that we are at our weakest.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."