

A friendly alcoholic – attributing blame – scapegoats

Another frosty morning but clear blue skies. I decided to go to the regular Tuesday morning coffee sessions at my church. There were only three of us there. When I arrived. The lady in charge for the morning had made three different types of cake. I should really have taken this early in the morning especially when I have had no breakfast but I cannot resist chocolate cakes so I had a small piece. People drifted in and when I left an hour later there were about 15 people there.

We have a new vicar who is called Adam Pitt. He is a local man and has four children of his own, the oldest is 14. He has two adopted children under two years of age. The fact that the vicarage has five bedrooms, most likely constituted part of his decision to move here. I'm told that he has a ten-year plan for the parish. He will be joining us after Easter when he has finished his training.

We discussed a homeless man who makes his home in an underground walkway by the supermarket. Evidently, he's a very nice man, but an alcoholic. For this reason he cannot accept most of the food that is given to him but I don't quite understand the logic here. The local population look after him as much as they can. Last night it was -2° but he said he felt quite warm. He's an ex-Navy man and something happened with a woman who let him down, he flipped and he found himself on the street. He knows he has an alcohol problem, but says it's the one thing that keeps him going and he admits he doesn't have the will to do anything about it.

Apart from the usual weather discussion, we discussed tree pruning, I said that trees should normally be pruned during

the latent season and this winter time is about right. I said you should never cut more than a third of the tree as it will be too much of a shock for it.

Among the gathering there was a lady called Phyllis, who is 98 years of age. She has always struck me as a very lively person. I was told that she was born the daughter of a farmer and during the second world war she was a land girl. She had left school at 15 and was expected to work maintaining the family home and also on the farm. At this age, she maintains her own garden, takes cutting etc and has a greenhouse full of plants. For 98 years of age that's not bad at all. She still drives.



Castle and Sun
Paul Klee

I find on such occasions you have to put yourself out and make the effort to speak and although there may be moments of silence, no harm is done, and someone thinks of something to say and off we go. There is an art of conversation and a good part of this is listening to other people and taking them up on perhaps a very simple statement and encouraging a dialogue to start. Paul Klee "drawing is taking a line for a walk". The same is true of conversations.

a long-standing friend of mine has written me a letter entitled "don't look for a scapegoat". I enclose some of the more hopeful quotes from the letter.

The search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions.

– Dwight D. Eisenhower

Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence.

– Napoleon

Laws of nature do not make exceptions for nice people.

– Harold S. Kushner