

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

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A country vicar



When I told someone that I was moving to the countryside to become a country vicar, they said: You'll find it's like living in a goldfish bowl! Two years on, I can understand what they meant. You can't be anonymous when living in a village or a small town. It's not quite a case of the net curtains being moved aside when you walk down the village street, but the fact is in small places, people are noticed.

Now sometimes this can be a disadvantage, but for much of the time, it is a real blessing. People who move to small places after living in urban or suburban places are often surprised by the different quality of life found in rural communities. There is an expectation on the new resident that they will join in, support village events, and be prepared to give a bit of themselves in conversation and friendliness. For me, this points to a very basic need we all have to be known, and in the best communities, cherished for what we are - in all our differences of personality and outlook.

It reminds me of what the writer of Psalm 139 says when he thinks of the way that God knows him: 'I'm an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking. You know when I leave and when I get back; I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too - your reassuring presence, coming and going.'