

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

10 May 2017: Rosemary Ward - an elder at Petersfield URC

I shall pass this way but once

For the past few months, I have been researching my family tree. It is something I started doing years ago, but gave up as other things got in the way. However, I decided that this time I would subscribe to a well known family history website and do it properly. I became really hooked and was spending every moment of free time, shut away on the computer, pouring over lists of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths. That was until I was stopped short by a comment from a family member who said, 'What is the point of worrying about all those dead people, shouldn't you be worrying more about the living?'

This made me think about why I was doing it. I can appreciate why, in some circumstances, it might help someone to know where they came from, but for me what difference will it make if all I have is a list of names, dates, places and sometimes professions? However, researching previous generations of my family brought home to me that in the great scheme of things we, as individuals, only exist on earth for a very short time. So yes, we probably should be worrying more about the living! We should really listen to people, spend time with them and try and make life more pleasant for them.

These musings led me to be reminded of the words of Etienne de Grellet, a Quaker missionary, "I shall pass this way but once; any good that I can do or any kindness I can show to any human being; let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." Whatever our faith, or whether we have no faith at all, let us not miss opportunities to help to make the world a better place for at least some people.