



This has been a wonderful summer for butterflies in our garden. It might have something to do with the number of different Buddleias we have, which have provided a progression of flowers over the past month. Six peacock butterflies came to lunch the other day and various others have dropped in for a feed before revving up for their aerial ballet. This red admiral was caught by my camera on holiday in Norfolk some time ago – one of those rare moments when they stop with wings wide open. There's always a sense of achievement, taking a photo like this. Butterflies always seem to be on the move, like leaves blown in the winds of autumn they float up and drop down, drifting across the garden in an apparently aimless journey.

But of course, it is far from aimless – these beautiful aerial blooms have a decided and definite purpose; to find a mate, to lay eggs and to gracefully pass away. In some species, such as the Peacock and Red Admiral, late maturing adults will hibernate in garden sheds and churches – coming out in the spring to take advantage of any available food and the opportunity to lay eggs on newly emerging leaves. And fortunately, both those butterflies prefer nettles as their nurseries – their caterpillars are not to be found destroying the carefully husbanded plants in the kitchen garden.

In fact, there is nothing purposeless in all of nature. Every creature has its particular slot to fill, its job to do, its life to lead. Every creature, including us.

But we have the opportunity to make choices. A Cabbage White butterfly has no choice but to lay its eggs on our brassicas, but we have the ability to choose so many different routes in life.

The choices we make can bring happiness or misery, fulfilment or despair. We are also aware and sometimes subject to the opinions and choices of others who try and channel us into their way of life. Because of our ability to choose we are

surrounded by siren voices, selling everything from lifestyle, diet, and political affiliation. And because the voices are so persuasive, we may find ourselves in a situation that harms us, that we cannot extricate ourselves from, and we feel lost. Faced with so many choices, it can seem impossible to decide which route to take in life. Taking a step into church can be one of the hardest decisions to make – we've heard so much negative publicity about religion as a whole and Christianity in particular.

But one of the things that I have often heard from people coming into our community for the first time – is – 'She/He seems so contented and comfortable with life, so happy – I thought, I want some of that.'

We are not brought to know God through talk, through siren voices, through articles and podcasts. We are brought into the presence of God by other people, people who have found him, and found the peace and confidence that God's love brings.

Let's face it – if you know that you are loved so much that someone is prepared to die for you – if you know that you are worth life itself – you must be a pretty wonderful person. And it's by responding to the one who loves you, by loving and caring, nurturing and supporting, being confident and yet humble, that you open the door to others to find what you have learnt.

That God's love makes everything else take on a new luminescence, a joy, a sense of purpose and of completion – knowing that someone thinks we are pretty wonderful gives us the confidence and courage to face everything that life hurls at us, and to pick ourselves up, take his offered hand and find life and purpose again.