

'It never rains but it pours' or does it?

Jo Loveridge

Ever since a drought was announced we have had rain. Everything looks very lush in our gardens, the trees in the Churchyard are a radiant lime green and vegetation is growing well, a little too well in the case of the weeds and because it has been so wet, we have not been able to get out to sow seeds or plant tender plants.!

We usually use the phrase 'it never rains but it pours' of our personal lives when one difficulty arises and then another and another, or in our working lives about the work that stressfully piles up all at the same time. Such times can lead to feelings of great anxiety or that sinking feeling about how we might get through the pinch points in our lives.

Importantly psychological research has found that people who are religious or spiritual can use their spirituality to cope well with life, Dr R Lee's book *The Superstress solution* suggests. She notes that:

"They're better able to cope with stress, they heal faster from illness, and they experience increased benefits to their health and well-being. On an intellectual level, spirituality connects you to the world, which in turn enables you to stop trying to control things all by yourself. When you feel part of a greater whole, it's easy to understand that you aren't responsible for everything that happens in life."

A study of 126,000 people found that the people who frequently attended services increased their odds of living longer by 29 per cent!

The [Handbook of Religion and Health](#) also suggests:

- Hospitalized people who never attended church have an average stay of three times longer than people who attend regularly.
- Heart patients were fourteen times more likely to die following surgery if they did not practice a religion.
- Elderly people who never or rarely attended church had a stroke rate

double that of people who attended regularly.

- People who are religious tend to become depressed less often than others and when they do become depressed, they recover more quickly.

How can this be, what are the benefits of prayer and faith?

Firstly, the church and our faith provide social support and this important, consistent element enables us to feel we belong, we are part of a wider family and this can give us happiness and good health. Regular churchgoers not only get support from other churchgoers, they also GIVE support to others, and this altruistic activity promotes better health. Even though, like any family or community, we get things wrong and people upset one another the sense of well-being ultimately far surpasses these difficult phases.

Secondly, Christianity with its creeds and beliefs binds us together through these common opinions.

Thirdly, our faith gives us guidance as we try to live out God's love in our lives. Life does run more smoothly when we follow a greater path than our own small selfish ideas!

Finally, faith attaches meaning to events. The liturgy, the pattern of the Church's Year gives us hope, the ultimate stress reducer. Hope, doctors say, is about the best thing you can do for your body.

This season of Trinity, we can pray:

*O God, Creator, Father, moment by moment you hold me in being,
On you I depend.*

*O God, eternal Son, friend and brother beside me,
In you I trust.*

*O God the Holy Spirit, life and love within me,
From you I live.*

May the sun shine gently upon you all!