

TIME TO REFLECT

AUGUST 2022

The Commonwealth Games have come to the City of Birmingham and the wider region of the West Midlands.

For many of us, there has been something special about seeing the Commonwealth Games Marathon that we might have seen through the streets of the Gold Coast in Australia or in the years before that Glasgow or Delhi, now passing landmarks like Cadbury World, the Selly Park Tavern, Cannon Hill Park and Birmingham City Centre.

Seeing Victoria Square and Centenary Square on the National News and Major Sports coverage every day is really special for those of us who have grown up here and hopefully for those who have come to live in Birmingham in more recent years.

To know that World Records are being made in Birmingham and that the eyes of the world are on our new Bull gives us a reason to be proud of the place we call home.

And it is always said that a true measure of an event like the Commonwealth Games is the legacy for the city and region afterwards.

But what does this legacy mean? Is it: how many athletics events are held at the Alexander Stadium or the new Smethwick Aquatics Centre in the future?

Perhaps we can look at something much more fundamental. Anybody who has walked around Birmingham City Centre in past days has sensed an atmosphere that is different – an enjoyment, a pleasant sense of community for both residents and visitors.

And we can look beyond the Commonwealth Games for that feeling. Do you remember the weekend of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee at the beginning of June this year? Maybe it was just that people had a good, long weekend with the sun shining? But it seemed more than that. There was a real atmosphere of goodness and life around and about.

But we know that life can be tough for people, and there cannot be an ongoing honeymoon even when good times are like this.

And the England Women's Football Team winning the European Championships at Wembley is all part of this feelgood factor this Summer. And so many people have pointed to the fact that there is something so much bigger than sport in this moment for women and for societal change.

This summer has the potential to create memories for so many of us which will be part of our story for a long time to come. Being able to say of the Summer of 2022: Do you remember when...

Am I about to make some connection with the life of faith?

Well, St Paul certainly speaks of running the race to the finish and keeping the faith (2 Timothy 4: 7) and of all the runners in the stadium aiming for an earthly prize, but we aim for a heavenly prize (1 Corinthians 9:24), but let's not try too hard. Let's look at the fruits of the Holy Spirit:

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (St Paul to the Galatians 5:22-23)

Haven't we seen the best of these fruits of the Holy Spirit in the competitors and visitors and in the resident community of Birmingham and the West Midlands over the days of the Commonwealth Games.

Sometimes people talking about bottling a particular experience or atmosphere so as to keep it.

As we know that these qualities, these fruits are possible and as we know that in what might be leisure time to enjoy for many people, let us try to remember the goodness that is in each person and the goodness that is within us and as we continue to celebrate success, and hopefully gracious losing, we may learn new ways of living and continue to be proud of where we live, where we are from and the fact that many other people during these days are coming to see our locality as special too!

