



“The Upside” by Rev Karen Nelson

Recently, Mike and I watched a film called ‘The Upside’. It’s based on a true story about a man who, after a paragliding accident, becomes paralysed from the neck down. A search begins to find an assistant for the man, to help him with personal care and everyday activities. A long line of candidates with extensive qualifications and relevant experience arrive for interview. The man is not impressed and, for reasons which will become clear if you watch the film, instead decides to employ the person least suited to the job, a guy called Dell. Dell has no qualifications or relevant experience, his life is chaotic and challenging, and the two men’s lives couldn’t be any more different. I think you probably know where this is going... the two form an unlikely friendship and the beauty of the film is that, ultimately, they help each other.

Beauty is a good word for this film – watching the blossoming friendship between these two people, whose lives are so very different, is beautiful. At the start you think: how can this ever work? But then you come to realise that the difference between them is actually the key to the depth of their relationship. They both give to the other a different perspective on life.

As human beings, we’re programmed to seek out people who are like ourselves. The ‘other’ can be unsettling. Who is this person? Are they friend or foe? However, when we step beyond the barriers we place around ourselves, we may discover that the “other” is not so very different after all. And the differences we may find, have the capacity to transform our lives.

Jesus said, “Love your neighbour as yourself”. My suggestion is not only is this commandment an instruction to care for others but also an invitation to fullness of life. Through experiencing the world through someone else eyes, we can see it differently, more fully. So, let’s be open to what we can learn from others and enjoy the beauty that can come from those unexpected encounters.