

Lessons from the geese

We had the privilege for 10 years of living on the west Norfolk coast, where in the winter, every morning and evening, hundreds, sometimes thousands of geese would fly over head, always in their V formation.

Bird experts have done a lot of study on this and how the geese work as a team.

By flying in a V formation, it's been calculated that the whole flock add 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone – what a powerful picture of the value of teamwork, when it's done well.

And apparently, when the lead goose gets tired, it just indicates that it wants to drop back and another goose flies to the front position. Load is shared far more equally than in most organisations.

Two particular things I think are really beautiful:

The first is the noise. We use the word HONK, which is not a very beautiful word, really. But actually, when you hear a whole formation of geese making this sound, it's actually a very beautiful sound. Interestingly, all the geese honk, with one exception - the one in front at that moment. He or she is silent. It's like the geese are honking to encourage those in front to keep up their speed.

The two most professional and successful organisations I have worked for (one was a church, one was a college) were the two where there was the most honking. Culture of appreciation, gratitude and spurring each other on. In groups where there is much encouragement, the production is much greater.

One final thing, so beautiful:

When a goose gets sick, wounded or shot down, either one or two of the other geese drop out of formation and follow it down to protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then they launch out with another formation.

In this village, there has been a lot of standing by each other in COVID time, but what a wonderful lesson from the geese.

Let God speak to us through his creation. Let's learn from these animals. Just occasionally, they have a wisdom that we don't.