

Vicar's Pastoral Letter

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Subject : Giving & Receiving

Dear Friends,

A few years ago I came across a Church Notice Board that gave the Vicar's name as "Rev Churchman." What a wonderful name for a clergyman, I thought, until I saw his initials "D.E.D" which rather took the shine off it! I'm sure that the Rev Churchman was anything but "dead" spiritually but it was a reminder that even the smallest change can make a big difference.

I was fortunate enough 10 years ago to visit the Holy Land and one of the most beautiful places was The Sea of Galilee. The area is very lush, green and highly cultivated and as you gaze out over the water you can easily imagine Jesus and His disciples crossing over the water or the disciples fishing in its silvery waters. The sea is surrounded by hills and from those hills flow the tributaries that make the River Jordan and feed the sea. As one writer put it "The Sea of Galilee laughs in the sunshine. Children play on its banks and people build their houses near to it, and birds their nests and every kind of life is happier because it is there."

The River Jordan then flows south into another and very different kind of sea, which is known as The Dead Sea. The water is so heavily salted that nothing can survive. It is an utterly barren place without habitation of either man or beast and the air hangs heavy above its water.

These two stretches of water are not that far apart so what makes this profound difference? Has the water changed? No. Has the nature of the soil or countryside changed? No. This is the difference. The Sea of Galilee receives but does not keep the Jordan. For every drop that flows into it another drop flows out. The giving and receiving go on in equal measure. The Dead Sea holds on tenaciously to what its got and every drop it gets, it keeps. The Sea of Galilee gives, shares and lives. The other sea gives nothing and it dies hence its name. There are two kinds of people in the world just as there are two seas in Palestine.

Which are you? Which are we as a church? Are you as willing to receive as you are to give to others? If we fall down on generosity of Spirit and fail to recognise the gifts of others and embrace them or if we hoard our blessing then indeed we will become "Dead Churchmen or Churchwomen" and remember that we're not commissioned to make Church-people but Christians and Christians both give and receive in equal measure.

With every blessing,

Peter

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