

Vicar's Pastoral Letter

Date : March 2010
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Subject : We are all in God's hands

Dear Friends,

This will be my last Pastoral Letter for a while as I am about to go on a three month period of Sabbatical leave. Every ten years in the Church of England a minister is allowed three months paid leave to do something different from his usual work and hopefully to recharge his/her batteries. It is, in fact, thirteen years since I last had a sabbatical and therefore I'm a little overdue and thought that, having served here now for over 10 years, this year would be a good opportunity to take one. I shall be away from Monday 29th March to Saturday 3rd July and will hopefully make my reappearance at the St. Mary's Summer Fete on The Bottle Stall! As you probably know I'm a very keen photographer and I hope to spend a good deal of my time away taking photographs and putting together an exhibition that will hopefully be thought provoking and stimulating and which will be on display later this year.

I am very fortunate here in having the support of a wonderful, very able and supportive team and, therefore, will be leaving the life and work of the United Benefice in very good and capable hands during my absence. The Rev David Hassell (828096) will be the resident minister ably supported by our three experienced Lay Readers: Peter Fitzjohn (820320), Sheila Cook (831829) and Libby James (353935). I know, therefore, that the life and work of our Churches will not only continue but bloom in my absence and rest assured that both pastorally and spiritually everyone will be catered for.

It is, of course, good to know that during any time of change there is One who does not change and that is Jesus Christ our Lord and our Saviour. We are ultimately not in the hands of any human being but are in His totally powerful and loving hands. It is we who plant the seeds but it is God who gives the growth and brings things through to completion and fruitfulness. This is the wonderful message of Easter which lies at the heart of our faith. The disciples had pinned their hopes on Jesus and yet, on Good Friday, all those hopes appeared to be dashed as they saw Him betrayed, crucified and killed on the Cross at Calvary. The road, however, did not end at Calvary but continued to the empty tomb and Jesus Raised From The Dead on Easter Day! Alleluia! God proved beyond doubt and for all time that, despite all the broken dreams and shattered hopes of this life, He is still in control and that ultimately nothing can prevent the purposes of Love from being fulfilled. This is the God whom we praise and thank and this is the God to whom we offer our lives in faithfulness and trust knowing that in all the changing scenes of this life He is in charge and has the power to bring to completion the work that He has begun.

And so I leave you for the next few months in the hands of our Heavenly Father praying that He will bless you and keep you safe and secure in the knowledge of His purpose and love for you. I am so grateful for all your love and support as well as that of my colleagues and friends but I'm especially grateful for the love of Him who will never let us go.

May God bless and keep you all this Easter and in the months that lie ahead and I very much look forward to seeing you again on my return.

THANK YOU & GOD BLESS

Peter

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