

Vicar's Pastoral Letter

Date : April 2010
Author : Rev. Peter Holzapfel, St. Mary's Church, Kempsey, Worcester.
Subject : The Church's role in the Community

Dear Friends,

This will definitely be my last Pastoral Letter for some time for, as you know, I am due to go on a period of Sabbatical leave and will return to work on July 3rd. But, before I go, I wanted to share with you the results of a Survey that we conducted last summer of nearly 150 households in Kempsey.

The aim of the survey was to find out how people view the Church and how important it is for the life of our community. I would like to thank all those who participated and apologise that it has taken so long to report back on the findings. The majority of those surveyed were not regular church attendees and yet well over half commented that the presence and life of the church was essential to the identity of the village and our quality of life. A similar percentage also said that in the event of loss and difficulties in their lives they would consider seeking the support and help of the church and its Ministry Team. Finally, over 60 per cent would like the church to be kept open generally so that they could use it either for prayer or simply to be quiet and still. These results are very encouraging and I'm convinced, following our recent open meeting to discuss the future of our sister church, St. Denys', that they represent the views of many people throughout the country especially in rural or semi-rural areas.

The majority of people may not feel the need to join the church for worship and fellowship on a regular basis nor, with families working hard throughout the week may they even have opportunity or energy, but this does not mean that they are disinterested in spiritual matters. This is reflected in the many contacts we have with people not only at times of sadness and loss but also times of thanksgiving and celebrations such as weddings and baptisms. People do feel the need to relate to something or someone bigger and greater in their lives and to seek such stability especially in an ever-changing world.

I would repeat, what I have often said in the past, that we are there not only for the regular church attendees but for everyone who lives within our parish boundaries and this includes you. The Vicar or Ministry Team may not be able to visit every home within the parishes due to their ever increasing size but this does not mean that we are not there for you should a need arise. We do, inevitably, need you to contact us but assure you that if you do then we will always do our best to serve you accordingly.

I am certainly not claiming perfection nor that some people don't fall through the net but we most certainly, with God's help, do our best. It is very encouraging for us to know that people would feel free and able to contact us and seek our assistance should the need arise. On the subject of keeping the churches locked I have always thought it a wrong thing and a contradiction of what we're about to have our church buildings closed for most of the time. I deeply regret it. There are, of course, security issues involved and insurance considerations but the general consensus of opinion among insurance companies seems to be that churches are now actually safer if they are left open. This is certainly an on-going debate and one that we shall be hopefully having again in the not too distant future for I personally would like our churches to be left open much more if this were possible.

Finally, just to remind you that during my absence Rev. David Hassell will have general responsibility for the parishes working closely, as ever, with our Ministry Team, Church Wardens and PCC. Enquiries about Baptisms and Thanksgiving Services should be directed towards Libby James who is one of our Readers. All phone numbers and contact details are in the Parish Magazine and Newsletter.

May I thank you all again for your love, support and encouragement and I look forward to once more serving you as your Parish Minister when I return in July.

With every blessing,

Peter

Rev. Peter Holzapfel

vicar@stmaryskempsey.org.uk

www.stmaryskempsey.org.uk

TRIBUTE TO DOUGLAS FRANK

It was with great sadness that we heard recently of the death of our dear friend, Douglas Frank. Douglas and Rosemary have been members of our church family for many years with Douglas being an active member of the Church Men's Group. Douglas was a lovely, kind-hearted man with a great generosity of spirit and a brilliant sense of humour. It was always a pleasure to spend time with him and a privilege to count him as a friend. You never quite knew what he was going to come out with next but, whatever it was, it would always get you thinking and invariably smiling! Douglas and Rosemary have had a long and very happy marriage and I've always regarded them as one of the best examples of what Christian marriage should be. Rosemary, Richard and Caroline will miss Douglas greatly but we can be comforted with the knowledge that he is now free of his illness and completely restored through God's wonderful powerful love. Our Friend, Jesus, is always with us and a sure help in times of trouble and so our love and prayers continue to go out to Rosemary and the family in the knowledge that one day we shall be united. Douglas, friend to us all, may you rest in peace with Jesus and may you rise with Christ in glory and in the inheritance of life everlasting: **Amen.**

Peter

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