

Rector's Letter – April 2019

Dear Friends,

The Rev'd Canon Jenny Tomlinson is to be collated to Archdeacon of Birmingham on Sunday 12th May at a service in Birmingham cathedral at 3.30 pm. As you may be aware, I have a long-standing arrangement to take a period of 'extended study leave' from May to July. As I am taking Sunday 28th April off, I'll be away from Easter Day, 21st April, until my first Sunday back that is 4th August. In my absence, the wardens, Gill and Denis, will be in charge in the parish and I am sure that you'll give them your full support. During my sabbatical, I will be considering prayerfully my long-term future and would value your prayers. By the way, Rachel Prior, my colleague will write a 'Curate's Letter' for the parish magazine in my absence.



Jenny's final Sunday here is going to be Easter Day. She is going to preside at St. James, Swards End in the morning and preach at Choral Evensong at the parish church. Afterwards there will be presentations and one or two speeches expressing our gratitude for Jenny's ministry in the parish over the last 10 years or so, with some accompanying nibbles and drinks.

A new beginning - in Birmingham - and an ending - in Saffron Walden – is the nature of transitions. Although there is likely to be some expectation of what is coming next, the dominant motif, at the time of departure, is a sense of loss. That makes 'moving on' difficult. While the Ella Fitzgerald song 'Every time we say good-bye' is about a romantic relationship, it captures the pain of leaving: 'Every time we say good-bye, I die a little.'

Growth in Christian discipleship has been described as the task of learning to 'let go.' For all of us, whether we are a person of faith or not, life is a series of starts and finishes. Our life journey begins with birth and ends in death. In between, we learn to negotiate a succession of changes. As the pattern of our lives shifts, we strengthen our grasp on the theological virtues of faith, hope and love at these junctures by turning to Christ.

On a daily basis, we greet the morning and journey towards the night. Morning and evening prayers help us daily to renew our trust in God. In the weekly cycle, we start on Monday by offering the week to God and culminate in worship on Sunday by putting our faith in God once more. In the major events that cross across these familiar comforting routines, there is special opportunity to give our lives to God in confidence, knowing that God is constantly faithful.

As we embrace the discipline of repeatedly renewing our trust in God in the cycles and changes of life, we experience the 'dying and rising with Christ' which is integral to 'following Christ.' In baptism, we are plunged into his death and resurrection. As we turn to Christ in the 'changes and chances of this fleeting world,' we share in Christ's in Good Friday and Easter, in Death and Resurrection, in the Paschal Mystery.

On our journey through Lent with Christ to the Cross, we head towards Golgotha and crucifixion. The agonised cry of death is supplanted by the exultant shout, 'Jesus is risen,' on

that first Easter morn. Whereas annually we travel this road to Jerusalem, to the Cross and then to the empty tomb, we are taken deeper into Christ, his suffering and his joy, each successive year. Thereby, we are better able in the dying and rising of each day, the rhythm of every week, and in all the transitions that we face, to trust in God.

St Augustine instructively summons us to: Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence. And all God's people said, 'Amen.'

With love,

David Tomlinson

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