

Rector's Letter - Rev'd Jeremy Trew - February 2023



Dear Friends,

February sees us reach Ash Wednesday (22nd) and the beginning of Lent. Last year Bishop Guli encouraged us to follow a quiet Lent; minimising meetings and taking time out to reflect and pray on how and where God was leading us. The Bishops of the Diocese have been continuing to do this, along with others, and the fruits of this will begin to be seen this Lent.

Every Diocese has its own strategy. In Chelmsford Diocese this was called "Transforming Presence", and was initiated by Bishop Stephen. When I was looking for what turned out to be this post I read the strategies of many Dioceses. They all have different titles and they all come in different packaging, but they are basically the same thing: The recognition that the Church of England finds itself in a very challenging position where resources are increasingly scarce and where traditional responses no longer seem to work as they once may have done.

Bishop Guli is (for someone who has sat on Bishop's Council, Diocesan Synods, and Boards of Mission) frankly a breath of fresh air. Issues that have been repeatedly kicked down the road are being faced, and there is the welcome recognition that what may work well in outer London may not be the same as what is best for rural Deaneries, or for the commuter-rural area we find ourselves in. "Transforming Presence" as a universal Diocesan strategy is now finished, although we are welcome to use its resources locally if they are helpful to us. The challenge, or vision if you like, is now for the local Church to faithfully and prayerfully form its own sense of calling, appropriate to its resources and its setting. This recognises the belief that God has already equipped the Church to be all that God calls it to be at this moment, and that as the Church grows in its faith, both the calling and the equipping will increase.

We will be working together as a Deanery, and as the Saffron Walden & Villages Team to work out what that means for us. As part of this, we are seeking to work more closely as a Team, sharing our resources and meeting our challenges together. We have recently been given permission to recruit a replacement for Caroline. This person will be based in the Vicarage in Ashdon, and also have a role in Hadstock, but will serve across the Team. This Lent we will be offering a number of Lent courses, looking at faith from different angles. We hope to continue this after Lent with other courses and with a development of small groups; house groups and the like. I will be offering a course looking at the Eucharist; its meaning and practice down the years. We will be sharing in the Eucharist together each week as we explore this simple but deeply rich act that Jesus commanded his followers to do. Within this you will have the chance to break bread and wine as the early Church did, and also as the Prayer Book (1662) would have us do. One of these will probably be familiar to you. The other I doubt you have ever experienced before. Which is which may well surprise you. This, and the other courses we offer have one purpose; to equip us as Disciples. You will be most welcome.

Jeremy

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