

## Letter from the Vicar

Saturday 26 September

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of the joys and privileges of being a parish priest is being involved in the life of God's Church at those life-defining moments – when folk come forward to begin their journey of discovering, and being in relationship with, God at Baptism; when they affirm their faith in Jesus as the Christ at Confirmation; when they declare their love for another in God's presence through the sacrament of Holy Matrimony; when they commit to serve God's Kingdom here on earth in a specific way through Ordination; when they are nurtured and sustained in their journey of faith through the sacramental gift of Holy Communion; and through the ministry of the Church at the end of our earthly pilgrimages. Of course there are many more moments in life when the Church will resonate strongly in our lives, but these life-defining moments are special and worth celebrating.

In pre-Covid times, such celebrations would involve gathering the community together (friends, family, loved ones) in celebration or remembrance with food and stories shared among us. Sadly, with the recent imposition of *The Rule of Six* and other restrictions placed on gatherings, it is not possible to celebrate in our customary ways. Today, for instance, I represented the Parish at one of the four diaconal ordination services at the Cathedral at which Vanessa Hadley-Spencer was made a Deacon in the Church of God. Despite there being only 3 ordinands being made Deacon at each service, and each ordinand allowed only half a dozen people into the Cathedral to support them, the service was very moving and prayerful, and the appropriate way for each of these servants of God to begin their public ministry in his Church. It was fabulous to see the look of joy on Vanessa's face (and the other Deacons) as she/they was affirmed in their calling – a calling that whispered to her whilst a chorister in our Parish and has been tested and challenged ever since. *(Below are some pictures of Vanessa after the service.)*

Each of us, who has been baptised into Christ, have a calling to be the best that we can be; to love all God's people as much as we can; to serve each other in the ways that we can; to pray for each other as often as we can. Of course we do not all have a calling to Holy Orders but we do all share in the common call to make Christ's love and forgiveness evident in our community by the way in which we live our lives. We are called to show in word and deed the Good News of God active in our lives and offer that as a way of living to those who do not yet know this message of salvation. Over the past month it has been a real joy to welcome 5 children and their families into the fellowship of faith through Baptism. Individually they were named in God's presence, adopted as his children, forgiven, and charged to *take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church* and to *shine as lights in the world to the glory of God the Father*. At a time when the nights are drawing in and the pain and darkness of pandemic hangs over us, it is good to be reminded of the light, life, love, and hope of God present among us and that although things are difficult and different at the moment we are not alone in all of this. God is with us. God is listening. God still loves us.

I suspect that, for many of us, our usual ways of expressing this call to others to share in the love of God might have reduced as our contact with others likewise has reduced. The prospect of returning to normal this year looks slim as a second wave of the virus batters the country but our ministry of prayer and presence (albeit sometimes virtually) has not reduced. Yes, we are doing things differently but we are still doing them: we are still worshipping God as best we can; we are still striving to live according to the values of God's Kingdom; we are still ambassadors for God to the people we do actually come into contact with. Each of us has a part to play in the life of God's Church. My prayer for us all is that we are able to fulfil our callings as best we can.

One of the hardest things for us to do as a Church, at present, is to socialise. The Christian faith is about relationships – with God and neighbour – but meeting with our neighbours is not straight forward due to restrictions. It has been pleasing that many have joined the virtual Coffee Mornings held every Wednesday morning at 11.00am, and to share many a happy evening with folk on Thursday evenings. These are important means of meeting but going forward I propose that the Coffee Morning continues to meet each week whilst the evening Happy Hour meets once a month – the first Thursday of each month (this will be reviewed if we enter a second lockdown). I am also organising a Virtual Quiz which will take place over Zoom next Saturday evening. This will be limited to 20 teams of up to 4 players (2 households being permitted to come together). Interactive questions will appear on your screen and then using another device (and the free app Kahoot!) answers are submitted. This is very much intended to be a social event but the fundraising element will also be most welcome. If you are interested in signing-up a team please contact me. First come, first served. £5 per player.

I dare say more virtual and ‘in-person’ events will be organised as time goes on, and I hope these will be of interest to you. For now, please remain assured of my prayers for each of you; keep safe; and remain secure in the knowledge of our God who loves us, cares for us, and enfolds us in his arms.

In Christ,

*Mike*



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