

Pastoral Letter from the Rev'd Dr Caroline Curren – March 2021



Dear Friends,

Lent is traditionally a period of self-denial. Yet I wonder how we would have reacted last year if we had been encouraged for just 40 days to give up meeting friends and family, hugging grandchildren, going on holiday and even going to the shops? Yet that is the regime that started in March 2020 and under which we still live a year later.

The purpose of self-denial during Lent has always been to grow in faith. So perhaps we should ask ourselves how this enforced self-denial has helped us to do this. What have we learned, and in what ways has our faith developed?

The same might be asked of a period of Vacancy. This month we welcome Jeremy to lead our Team Ministry in Saffron Walden and the Villages. It is indeed a great joy to welcome him and his wife Alison amongst us. Like Lent, however, a period of Vacancy is not simply a time when things are tough, when we have to work harder to keep the show on the road – although our churchwardens and all involved have certainly done that, and we are enormously grateful to them. It can be a period of learning and growth, a time in which we draw closer to each other and to God.

With many in our congregations having received the vaccine, bringing hope of a way out of lockdown and return to worship in our church buildings, we look to a new future nationally. With a new Rector to lead us, we look to a new chapter in the life of the Church here in Saffron Walden. Yet this future can only be built on the lessons we have learned in the past year or more.

As the first in our Archdeaconry to have been licensed by zoom – in April last year - I have much sympathy for Jeremy arriving during this time when we cannot celebrate or welcome him and his family in the usual ways. In normal times, hospitality is an important part of such welcome – and we are good at that in this place! I know that Jeremy will want to get to know us, and that we want to get to know him, and that this will be somewhat hampered by whatever restrictions are still in place. Yet perhaps a lack of such occasions will give him time to settle with us gradually and gently.

Whatever practical arrangements are possible, we will each want to enquire of the other what we have learned during this time of restrictions, and how it has helped us to grow in faith, as we seek together to build upon this for whatever lies ahead. The various opportunities for Lenten study and reflection, including the Quiet morning on 13th March, are all part of this as together we look back and also forward.

The year has brought tragedy for so many, and challenges and disappointments for us all, but through it all, I have had a deep sense of God's on-going presence alongside the encouragement of our church fellowship, and I hope that this has also been your experience. We can be sure that this will continue to be the case as we move ahead together in His name.

With love,

Caroline

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