

## Rector's Letter - Rev'd Jeremy Trew - February 2024

Dear All

Being a Christian isn't always easy. We may have other things we would like to do with our time. We might have good friends who think that going to Church on a Sunday morning is a bit of a strange thing to do. Sometimes religious belief can seem a little at odds with a world built on rationality (I have issues with this last one, but that's for another month).



The main challenge I have with Christianity is other Christians. Not you, of course, but those other embarrassing ones who say and do things that are just plain silly or stupid, or worse. And here's the challenge for me. I might understandably want to write them off and put a clear distance between myself and their behaviour. I might even want to claim that they are not real Christians. Maybe they are not, but only God alone can call that one. Instead, I must accept that they are my brothers and sisters in Christ: Fellow Christians, albeit not very good ones, at least not by my estimation. Maybe I'm not always a very good Christian myself, at least not by my estimation.

That's difficult. It's far easier to turn your back on those who disappoint or disturb you. And, if you do it right, you can do it in such a way that it leaves you feeling justified and even smugly superior. It's just that does not seem to be Christ's way.

Just before Christmas, after long debates at General Synod, the Bishops authorised prayers that allow for same-sex couples to be blessed in a Church service. You may have views on this that range from "about time," to "so what," to "how can the Church of England even call itself Christian." It does, it can, and it is. It is well above your pay grade, and mine, to decide who is and who isn't accepted by God.

Our PCC's will be debating these changes and the authorised prayers over coming meetings and deciding how each parish should best respond. As individual Christians we must also decide how we respond. To do this I would like to draw your attention back to the pastoral principles introduced with the Living in Love and Faith discussions. Any Christian community would do well to take these to heart, as I believe they offer an excellent approach to being God's people together in all aspects of our common life. They are:

- Acknowledge prejudice
- Speak into silence
- Address ignorance
- Cast out fear
- Admit hypocrisy
- Pay attention to power

I truly believe that any Christian and any Christian community committed to these values will be richer and deeper in its faith and better equipped to live the life Christ calls us to in our place and our time. This is not an easy way. The easy way is to build barriers and retreat

behind them, turning backs on all that unsettles and disturbs. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were faithful people who had done just that. He loved them, but he also grieved for them. We must resist any temptation, over any issue, to do likewise. That will sometimes be a very difficult thing to do. But, if we do it together, and if we do it trusting that Christ is with us, then it is at least possible. And it will show. And true faith is always attractive.

Jeremy

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