

Dear parishioners and friends

Life is not like a box of chocolates. Perhaps it is bad form to criticise this famous quote from the film *Forrest Gump*. However, it seems to me that life is like a box of much more diverse things than chocolates. You really don't know what you're going to get out of the box next. You might pull out a fluffy rabbit. You might pull out an unexploded bomb.

This Lent I have been reflecting on the massive contrasts we can encounter in one day, or even in one hour. Joy and pain. Tragedy and delight. And one might feel like inappropriate in the face of the other. How can I be delighted about one thing while I learn of a tragedy in another part of life?

The cross on which our Saviour Jesus Christ hung, is a place where all comes together. It is a place of pain and suffering. It is also a place of joy and salvation. It is a symbol of human power and a symbol of God's power. It is a place of costly love and redemption which sits at the centre of our faith as Christians, and it is at Easter that we are drawn again and again into its powerful witness.

We are an Easter People, living in the light of God's saving love. We know we are being redeemed, and that it is still a work in progress. But in our every day lives, where light and darkness both reside, we are called to look towards the light and hope of the Gospel of Jesus, and to share that light with those struggling in the dark. We do this most effectively in community.

As St Philip's and St Stephen's prepare to share a priest, there are changes required. The first and perhaps the most obvious, will be a change to Sunday morning worship patterns. I shall be glad to receive your prayerful responses to the consultation provided with this letter and available in the churches on the options I am considering. You will note, all these options will require some people to consider stepping into offering to lead non-communion services or setting up for services more. It will also require us all to be generous in learning to share our resources and our worshipping lives across these churches more deeply, and I hope and pray you will all feel warmly welcomed to share in the light and life of each other's church communities. Getting to know each other's churches offers a real chance for us all to learn from each other and enjoy experiencing new ways and chances to grow in our lives as Christians just as the disciples did after Easter Day.

Both churches will also be holding their Annual Parochial Church Meetings after Easter (19 April at St Philip's, 17 May at St Stephen's) and both need people to step into office holder roles and to be PCC members. Perhaps this is a way you can share God's light.

Wherever you are in this moment, and whatever you 'pull out of your box' next, I pray you will know Jesus walking alongside you, helping you take the next step and guiding you to walk in the light of hope and peace. Be assured of my prayers today and every day.

Easter blessings

*Abbie*

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