

Cait Writes (1)



Hello,

I hope you have all had a restful Christmas and are looking forward to this new year and all it promises to offer. I would like to share a few thoughts with you at the start of 2021.

In 1964, the church where I served my curacy (another St Michael's Church) was burnt down by a disgruntled ex-choir boy by the name of Walker – no relation. I recently received a copy of a book regarding the church's history and in it were several photographs of the fire damage and the people whose lives were so changed by those events. I know one couple who were due to be married the Saturday following the fire. One of the photographs depicts a sign that was placed outside the building, which read 'The CHURCH is not burnt - we shall re-erect the building'.

I have looked at that photograph more than any others in the book, this week. It drew me to thinking about what we call church and what we hold dear to us. In one sense, burning the church building down fortified the church in that area (although I do not recommend it). The community rallied together, they were determined to attend worship together in the church hall and they came back to the building stronger, with a collective history that they still share today.

However, what made me come back to the photograph was not a sense of inherited nostalgia, but a question – what happens after a disaster when the church building remains, but the people are the ones who have been burned? We hear so many predictions for 2021, with optimistic projections of life returning to "normal" by the Summer, but how will that normal manifest itself and what will be salvageable from the rubble? What will need shoring up? There may be things that can no longer continue and how will that be received?

As the new vicar, I will not know what has been before and what was precious to some people and that creates an anxiety about upsetting people with my enthusiasm to get started, post Covid 19. I will also have ideas for the church, some which may not be expected, some may be flat out rejected – that is part of our ministry here – to seek out new paths and to discern which routes to take, together. Yet that 'together' was easier for the congregation who had lost their building than for the congregations of today who have lost their 'togetherness'.

So, how do we wish to step out? Perhaps you have ideas. If so, please do write them down for me. Send me an email or drop a note through the door. I cannot guarantee every idea will be taken up but the fact that people show willingness and inspiration will encourage myself and the PCC. However, if you are feeling at a loss at this time and cannot see the viable timber through the smoke and ash, perhaps you would also like to let me know.

I am planning to start a short discipleship course this year. I would like it to grow from the community; something to enable discussion around issues which we are unclear about but also an opportunity to meet regularly, to pray with one another, to encourage and to build our faith together. I invite everyone to pray about this and to speak to me if you would like to take up the opportunity to become a part of this group. Our church has been damaged but we will re-erect the community and we will come back stronger and more capable of facing what the world of 2021 will have to offer.

God bless and a very Happy New Year to you all.

Cait