

Rector's Letter - Rev'd Jeremy Trew - June 2025

Dear All

The Diocese of Chelmsford is currently prevaricating over whether or not to run a clergy conference. These events used to be a regular feature of clergy life; a good opportunity to be updated on Diocesan matters; receive some training and spiritual input, and have a moan about parishes (I think that's called networking). Such conferences don't happen so often these days. In fact, the last one I attended was in 2018. The ability to keep in touch by other means, "gather" large numbers via the internet, and the simple cost have meant they are rarer now. I don't know if this proposal will get off the ground. It sounds like we feel we ought to, but we can't really make up our minds if we want to.



The first time I attended one of these though things were quite different. I was a green curate with just a few months' experience under my belt. Most of the faces were still strange to me and, not knowing if all the senior clergy had a sense of humour, I was a little intimidated. That's where the accommodation at the conference centre came in handy. You see, it was quite an old place and few of the rooms were en-suite. Meeting an unshaven Archdeacon stumbling down the corridor in their pyjamas early in the morning immediately undermined any sense of intimidation that either they wished to project, or I perceived. Here they were, mere mortals like me. Sadly, the accommodation has been upgraded, and new curates no longer get the benefit of the primitive bathroom arrangements.

Self confidence is a tricky thing. Most of us tend to be either lacking in it or possessing too much – self deprecating or arrogant. Either way we suffer from a misapprehension of our own worth and standing, and others do too as a result. Christianity has what I believe is a helpful response to all this; "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace" (Romans 3:23). It acknowledges a simple and honest truth; that we have all done wrong and made a mess of things. Yet this is not the end of the matter, for our wrongdoing is undone by God's own goodness. Because of that we may think well of ourselves with some justification. The public perception of Christianity is often that it simply pulls people down with all its "thou-shalt-nots", and the Church has certainly been guilty of this at times. Sorry. The deeper truth is that the Christian message both pulls us down to earth with its uncompromising truth about wrongdoing, but also exalts us with a message of restoration and new hope. That's why we call the Gospel message the "good news". It is good news for all of us; irrespective of our lack of confidence or arrogance; and, irrespective of what we look like in our pyjamas.

Please don't dwell on that last image.

Best wishes

Jeremy

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