March 2018 view from the Vicarage

The equation that sums up my ministry is; God = Love = Community.

I do not know how many of you, or indeed if any of you, have read Brian Maclaren’s recent book entitled ‘The Great Spiritual Migration’. It is not only an easy book to read but it makes so much sense.

Brian has this to say

*‘Religion is at its best when it leads us forwards. When it guides us in our spiritual growth as individuals and in our cultural revolution as a species...Unfortunately religion has become more of a cage than a guide, holding us back rather than summoning us forward…Instead of greeting the world with open arms as Jesus did, their successors stood guard with clenched fists. Instead of empowering others, as Jesus did, they hoarded power. Instead of defying tradition and unleashing moral imagination as Jesus did, they impose tradition and refuse to think outside the box.’*

Is this your experience of ‘Church’? Sadly it has been for many.

I believe ‘Church’ exists for the community, it is a verb rather than a noun. I see my role as your Priest as a facilitator, and encourager, and our church buildings to be centres where we meet and celebrate family occasions, where we meet to get to know each other better, where we meet to comfort one another at end of life, where we build community, and yes where we meet and pray and praise God together on a Sunday, and indeed on some weekdays.

The Church is inevitably made up of fallible individuals, we all are. Even within the Church of England, we may hold different personal views on many issues such as divorce, money, sexuality even the validity of women priests! What matters is not so much our views, as to how we listen to each other with love, how we contemplate and pray together with love, and thus let God’s spirit flow freely among us.

I have an overriding belief that God ***is*** love, and welcomes each and every one of us whatever our faith, marital status, creed, colour or sexuality.

The deep down question that needs asking is – what do ***you*** think 21st Century ‘Church’ should look like?

Whenever I ask myself this question I come up with one answer - love! And that is why the verse from 1 John 4 ‘God is love and those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them’ underpins everything that I believe we need for the church to be at the centre of strong and caring communities.

With every blessing

Rev’d Anne