

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter I am now completing my first full week as vicar and I have to say that Graham and I are both really pleased that we came here. We have been blown away by the warmth of the welcome that we have received, the beauty of the surrounding countryside and the vibrancy of our four churches and communities. I would like to thank you all for making our arrival such a good and happy one and look forward to getting to know you all much better and to be a part of the next chapter in the life of our Benefice.

Having said all that, I have to admit that I wasn't at all sure about starting my ministry here at the beginning of Lent – after all, isn't this meant to be a time of penitence and fasting? However, now that I am here, I'm beginning to feel differently. I have no doubt that there will be many good and exciting things ahead of us – the first of which is Easter, and plans are already in full swing to ensure that it is the great and meaningful occasion that it should be. Details of everything taking place in our villages are listed elsewhere in this magazine.

It's also at this time of year that I am reminded of an incident that happened a few years ago. I was asked to take an R.E. lesson for a class of 7 & 8 year olds in a local primary school. During the lesson we looked at some of the symbolism connected to Easter and the hidden meanings behind Hot Cross Buns and Easter Eggs. I then asked the children to decorate hard-boiled eggs with pictures of anything that they thought apt for the season.

The children worked hard before coming forward to show everyone what they had done and tell us the meaning. Obviously we had the cross but we also had grass and flowers for new growth, we had chickens and rabbits for new life, we had sunshine and blue skies for happiness and we had some quite intricate decorations to remind us of the beauty of Gods creation – every single egg showed a great deal of thought and had a definite spiritual meaning that was appropriate for the season.

Then Charlie (the class clown) came forward – instead of painting his egg with intricate pictures he had simply plastered thick dark blue food colouring all over it, then, because he had finished before anyone else and was getting bored he had decided to use it as a football. You can imagine the result. What we were presented with was a dark and broken mass – very different from the offerings of his classmates. “So what's this telling us about Easter?” I asked – quick as a flash came the reply “It's Jesus bursting from his tomb”.

I will never forget that incident – but it taught me a lot – not least that I shouldn't take things at face value. But it also sums up what happened when Christ died on the cross for us all. God intervened in the history of the world by sending his son not simply to improve what was already here, but to shatter the hold that the old dark order of things, things governed by sin and death, have on human kind. Having shattered that hold, he then showed us a new and much better way based on perfect love and self sacrifice and the promise of everlasting life spent with him and the Father in heaven. And that is the true meaning of Easter.

With love and Blessings to you all this Easter.

Fiona