

CLERGY LETTER

Dear Friends

As some of you may know, we recently had a bit of sadness at the vicarage when our dog Hector passed away. I have to admit that Hector was always very much Graham's dog – he was the one who fed him, walked him and generally looked after him – while, although I was always willing to step in if Graham couldn't, it was clear that Hector always looked on me as second best. To be honest, the feeling was mutual, although I would never want to see him hurt or suffer I often referred to him as the "incumbrance", which is the tongue in cheek name that my family has for all their dogs. After

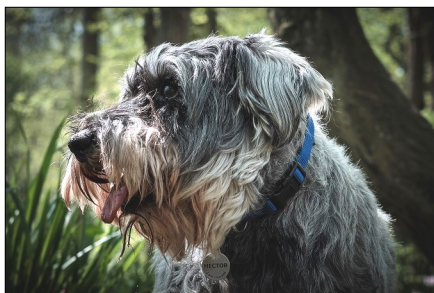
all, we have to make sure that they are taken out, regardless of the time of day or the weather before we can concentrate on doing what we want to do. And when they come back they often bring mud and mess into the house with them. While holidays away or short breaks have to be carefully planned in advance ensuring that the needs of the family pet are properly catered for.

Well, Hector had been going down hill for several weeks and we thought that we had prepared ourselves for the fateful day when



the inevitable would happen. How wrong we were! We knew we would both be upset, but we really didn't appreciate how upset and I certainly don't think that we had recognised how much he had brought into our lives throughout his life or how much we would miss him once he had gone.

Well, this got me thinking. Is there ever anything else in our lives that we take for granted or possibly even resent? Anything that we might refer to as an "incumbrance" that we feel puts obligations or responsibilities upon us or which we think restrict our ability to do what we want when we want? After all my recent letters and



articles asking for your financial and other support, you may even be wondering if the Church falls under that heading. I hope that isn't the case, but if it is, may I ask you to think hard about what life would be like if we locked the doors of all our village churches and simply ceased to function. What would life be like without our wonderful ancient buildings that give us such a brilliant link with the past? What would life be like if we couldn't celebrate the great Christian festivals of Easter,

having such special places to go to be quiet or take our problems to God? The list goes on.... Indeed, what would life be like if we not only closed our churches but also closed our access to a relationship with God himself?

I know that the vast majority of folk in this part of the world are not active churchgoers, many will even say that they have no belief in God at all. But it's amazing how many people who, when faced with a crisis or major problem, will automatically turn to God and ask for his help. Despite their former protestations of non belief they take comfort in knowing that he is always there in an emergency and always ready to listen and

to respond.

Looking back over the last 10 years I'm not sure that I always truly appreciated having Hector as part of my life, that is definitely my loss and I can't do anything about it now. However, it's not too late to start to appreciate the benefits of having God and his Church in your lives.....yet.

Please feel free to contact me if you ever want to talk about this or anything else.

With every Blessing for the coming month

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hane". It features a simple, elegant cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the top and a small loop at the bottom.