

John's Notes

from the priest-in-charge John Davies



Five years ago, on 22nd March, something very significant happened to me. I was welcomed into the life of The Good Shepherd Church at my licensing service. It was a big week for the church as it also embraced the celebration of the church's centenary, and it felt a bit strange to me leading that service as the new priest-in-charge in the presence of so many of my predecessors, who knew the place and its people far better than I did at that time.

This was my first appointment as a priest-in-charge, a rookie, wet behind the ears, straight from serving a curacy in Wavertree. Five years on I still feel at times that lack of experience, still know I have a great deal to work on about how to be a faithful priest and pastor (which are my calling) plus administrator / manager (roles I dislike which seem to have to come with the post!). I know that those things I *have* learned have been down to the friendship and support (sometimes critical, that's ok most of the time) of people here. So here's to the next five years!

I keep a scrapbook with various things in it from the time I've been here. The first item is a copy of the invitation to my licensing, with 'RSVP: Mrs E Lambert', and that makes me think again, with thanksgiving, about one of the people who have made life special for me here. Betty used to stand in the hall at the welcome desk as I led funeral processions out of church and I got into the habit of winking at her as I passed her by, as a way of saying 'thanks - see you later'. For everyone else's sake I try to hold it together emotionally at funerals but it really hit me at hers when passing through the glass doors that she wasn't there to wink at any more.

At that moment I felt very bereft as - like most of the rest of us here - I'd relied heavily on her help and guidance. She had been so good at sharing her gifts. Thankfully people rallied and many stepped in to take on roles she'd left for us to do; not least the new wardens Jim and Ann. Jim - who has given so much time to the care and upkeep of the building and to befriending those who use it (including groups we barely notice like the Narcotics Anonymous who value the Good Shepherd's hospitality so highly), and Ann - who often unnoticed has done a lot behind the scenes to ensure the continuing good order and accessibility of our worship and our building, as well as contributing valuably to the church's preaching and

teaching ministry.

Contrary to some people's ideas, Churchwardens don't have to be good at everything. Instead they tend to shape their own particular roles to suit their own gifts and skills: rather like clergy, and all the other volunteers who, by sharing the gifts they have, each help churches continue to be beacons of life and faith in their communities.

At this time of year we hold our Annual Parochial Church Council meeting (Sunday 26th April, 12.00) which offers the opportunity to people to consider taking on new roles - sidespersons, deanery synod representatives, PCC members, and this year two new posts: two reps on our new West Derby Churches Group Council, which we intend to be an interesting, creative forum rather than a dull business meeting, dreaming up good and interesting things which the churches can do together. We are *all* gifted - oh, yes, we are - and this is a time to think, how can I share my gifts with others?

Elsewhere in this magazine you can read about a West Derby Churches Group event called *Hidden Gems of Norris Green, Croxteth and West Derby*. It's a festival celebrating our local environment, in September, and through the summer here at The Good Shepherd we plan to prepare for it by taking some time to think together about our area and its history and the good things in it.

The second item in my scrapbook is a child's picture in crayon of me in my cassock, smiling. As I sat beside the bishop at my licensing service I could see Eleanor Myers in the front row with paper and pens drawing, and this was what she was creating: a card for me. Inside it says, "To Rev John Davies. Welcome to the Good Shepherd. I hope you like it, love Eleanor." It was a special gift to me at the start of a new ministry. I will always cherish that child's effortless generosity. It's good to share our gifts.

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