

Revd. Frances Drake

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A little while ago I was interested to hear Bishop Laurie, the Bishop for our area of the Diocese, talking about our Churches and what it means to be the Church in the community and the world. He entitled his words, '**Something Old – Something New**'. I thought that I would in turn this month, offer in this letter, the essence of what he said and leave you to reflect on it and how his words may speak to us in our various communities. For those of us who attend church regularly it should provide food for thought. For those who do not, do you agree or disagree with his thoughts?

Bishops tend to travel a great deal in order to be with their people across the Diocese and as a result, they witness worship in a wide variety of situations. Bishop Laurie spoke about the number of available publications that have been published around the topic of 'Being Church' and what this actually means. A number of these are saying that we/church must offer a whole range of experiences in homes; on the internet; in coffee bars and public venues; which will use modern and not archaic, hard to understand language; with music and ideas all designed to speak to today's people in ways that they can appreciate and understand. We are told that all these things are important, because the young people in our communities do not enjoy the normal style of church service.

Bishop Laurie said that he is not altogether sure, that that conclusion is entirely right. Rather, what young people don't like he says, is any kind of worship which is not done well; worship which is rushed along and colourless; lacking in sincerity and spirituality. Older people will feel the same but seem more prepared to put up with it. Should we ever be prepared to see any worship done carelessly? Should we not rather be going out of our way, to see that the situation is put right? Bishop Laurie was very straight when he said, that we are often far too ready to settle for worship of a low standard and that is a situation that none of us should accept.

So, in addition to the important 'new ways of being church', let's hear it he says, for 'old ways of being church'; old ways done extra well. Let's think about how we describe and advertise ourselves, through our local publications and notice boards. Do we use well thought out, designed and printed Service Orders that are easy to follow, particularly if we are not used to church services? Bishop Laurie speaks of how the church encourages; if it does at all; the young to come and join in and that when they do, how it/we encourage and allow them to feel part of the church, as people. Do we also use prayers that connect with the world and community, by addressing real life issues of the day?

Social events are designed to bring everyone together from both inside and outside the regular congregation. These continue to be an important and vital part of community living now, just as they have been over the centuries. But above all says Bishop Laurie, let our churches be examples of Holiness and the Love of God in our midst. This may be considered old fashioned, but surely this is what they should be? Shouldn't those churches do us fine? If our church communities can get that right, then 'New ways of being church' would be good too.

Whatever we do, let's strive to do it well; always to the best of our ability and as far as churches are concerned, examples of doing things 'beautiful for God'.

Speaking personally now, like Bishop Laurie, I enjoy the radio in the car and find myself switching between various stations; frequently switching between the old and the new. On one journey it might be 'Radio One'; on others 'Classic FM' or 'Radio Four'; I select according to a number of factors. Not everything that is old is outdated and useless and not everything that is new(er), is wonderful and the way to go; 'the best thing since sliced bread'. If we are discerning and listening people, we select what is good quality and what is done well, wherever it might be found. There are some superb hymns in the 'old(er)' hymnbooks but there are some dreadful ones as well, in which one wonders where God is. Some of our churches use newer hymn books. In those also there are to be found some superb words and tunes; which speak of God to us, in a very real way but there

are others which don't and in which there is very questionable Theology. We need to keep an open mind and look for the best **wherever it may be found**. We might be surprised!

Our churches offer a welcome and we work hard to make the services and welcome, accessible to everyone. Whether we are succeeding or not, only you can tell me/us. Please let us know, particularly if you have been to something and have found it lacking. What did you hope to find and it was not there? If we do not know, we cannot develop.

**MARGARETTING MOTHERS' UNION.** (Open to all five villages).  
 The December Meeting is Christmas Lunch at 'The Red Lion' in Margarettng – 12.00 for 12.30 – on Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup>. If you are coming, please let **Ivy Day** know asap on **354564**.  
**The January Meeting will held in the Committee Room of the Village Hall on Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> – 2.30-4.00pm.**  
 Frances

**The 'Four 'Cs' Club**  
 Come along for **Company, Chat, a Cuppa** and a piece of homemade **Cake**, on the **4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month**. We meet in **St, John's, Church Road, Mountnessing – from 3.00 to 4.00** and everyone is welcome.  
**The next opening will be the 28<sup>th</sup> December.**  
 Frances

**THINKING AHEAD TO CHRISTMAS SERVICES**

<b>Christmas Eve</b>	<b>Crib Services</b>	St. Giles	3.00
		St. Margaret's	5.00
	<b>'Midnight' Communion</b>	St. Giles	9.30
		St. Margaret's	11.30
<b>Christmas Day</b>		St. Mary's – Buttsbury	8.45
		St. Giles	9.30
		St. Margaret's	10.00
		'The White Hart'	12.30

**Sunday – 26<sup>th</sup> December** One Service only across the Benefice  
**St. Mary the Virgin – Buttsbury 9.30**

**New Year's Eve** **'Watchnight Service'** **11.30**  
**St. Margaret of Antioch – Margarettng**

**January 2<sup>nd</sup>** **Nine Lessons and Carols in all three churches**

	<b>St. Giles</b>	<b>9.30</b>
	<b>St. Margaret's</b>	<b>10.00</b>
	<b>St. Mary's – Buttsbury</b>	<b>3.00</b>
<b>Epiphany</b>	<b>St. Giles</b>	<b>6.00</b>