

The Rectory, 1 Rectory Close, Fryerning Lane. 352 562
patrick.sherring@ingatestoneparishchurch.org.uk
patrick.sherring@fryerningparishchurch.org.uk

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Already we find that we have arrived at the season of Lent. This is the season when traditionally we are encouraged to be a little more introspective than is usually. It is the season for a spiritual stock-take, or maybe even a spring-clean. Just how well are we doing in our Christian lives? Are we slowly but surely becoming more like the people that God intended us to be? Are our lives filled with the things of God, or are we so totally pre-occupied with every other agenda that God appears to be far in the background, if at all? These are the questions for every day of our lives, but if we cannot manage that, then we should certainly let them surface above the hustle and bustle of everyday realities during Lent.

If you would like help and a little prompting to consider these issues, then help is at hand in a number of ways.

1. As in previous years, the Churches Together are holding a set of evenings at the URC, this year every Monday in March at 8pm. This year they are entitled, *Tough Talk --the hard sayings of Jesus*. With the help of a CD based introduction featuring well known speakers from across the denominations, and a booklet to buy and take away and reflect upon, we will be able to see how some of Jesus' more difficult saying should have impact. The main discussions, as in previous years, will be in small groups. These are very successful evenings and I would encourage you to give this time to God and reflection during Lent. You can always set the video if there is something you simply cannot miss.
2. Last year saw the production of a booklet of daily reflections by all the local ministers, following the Bible Lectionary readings through the forty-day journey in Lent. We have produced another for this year. The cost is just £1 to encourage as many people as possible to take this journey together. The booklets will be on sale in all the churches. It is a remarkable testament to the way the churches work together and the trust felt by the ministers in each other that we are able to produce such a unique booklet. Do please be part of this journey this year. It will only take you a few minutes each day to read; though hopefully you will reflect on the daily offering for a little longer time.
3. If you wanted to come and see me and talk about your spiritual life and how this might be improved, please call and we will see if

it can be arranged. Offering spiritual direction has always been part of the work of the ordained ministry.

You will please note from the dairy of services in this magazine, that at Ingatestone we have re-arranged the monthly pattern of main services. Family Service with Communion becomes the 1st Sunday, Morning Prayer the 2nd Sunday, Common Worship Communion the 3rd Sunday, Morning Prayer the 4th Sunday and Common Worship Communion the 5th Sunday. Many thanks for the co-operation of the numerous people affected by these changes. Every Sunday there is now a communion service at either 8am or 9.45am. When I take a service at Ingatestone, I will not be dashing off to take a service at Fryerning, but can stay to talk with people. At Fryerning I can arrive much earlier and fresher, having not finished a service around twenty minutes before I am expected to start a totally different service. The involvement of a wider group of people taking services and being seen to share the ministry is also a very positive outcome.

These are exciting times for the people of Fryerning, those who attend St. Mary the Virgin Parish Church and those who hold it in special affection. After many years of deliberation and detailed planning, we are now able to launch the appeal to improve the facilities. A detailed brochure exists, containing computer generated images of the new part of the building already in place. The Victorian vestry will be demolished, and a new building comprising a toilet, small kitchen and two new rooms needs now to be funded in order that it can be built. This will improve facilities for existing regular services, baptisms, weddings and funerals. Opportunities will also exist to serve the community in new ways. A new heating system will be installed for the entire building. This is a beautiful small country Church building. Its character will not be changed by this work. Rather, it is a gift from the present generation to future generations, much as we have inherited from our forefathers in the faith. It is also a statement in belief in the future of the Church. The community in Fryerning is now only around 400 people. Who can say what it will be in fifty or a hundred years time? The Church needs the facilities to meet present demands, but also anticipate future developments. It could be argued that such a small community has never warranted its own Church. How many people lived in Fryerning when it was originally built? Far fewer than now. People then had vision and a belief in the future. The same is true relating to the many developments and changes in the history of the building, including its almost total re-modelling in Victorian times. We have the same vision and belief today.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*.

