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Dear friends,

Dedication and commitment are two words that sociologists and others who analyse trends in society tell us are out of fashion. I know that a number of societies locally struggle because those who make things happen are few and have been the same few for many years. Encouraging new people to be involved and to give the time required to carry on the running of the society is proving very difficult. If you belong to any group locally it is worth stopping and considering whether you are just a consumer of their offerings. Some years ago a politician said that we are in a society where we are all consumers. If that is so, then where are the providers? Where are the people who through their dedication and commitment enable others to consume activities? Do we ever stop and think about this reality? Could you be more actively involved?

Our churches are not places where people go to 'just consume a bit of religion', somewhere to make us feel better. Yes we should be energised and empowered by our involvement with church and seek to make a difference through our faith in the places we live and work. But church is also somewhere to feel involved. Going to church is not like going to the theatre. Church is a community of people engaged in the things of God, growing in love and service to Him and one another. As we continue to see congregations grow at regular Sunday services at Ingatestone and the Family service at Fryerning, so we look for more people to be involved. In particular our Sunday Club, which operated during the main part of the service on the second and third Sundays needs some extra people to show some dedication and commitment so that the wonderful people who are involved now can share the load. If you feel that you could help in any way, please be in touch.

Remembrance Sunday is always a poignant reminder of the dedication and commitment shown by brave young people from our local communities. Of course we remember those who paid

the ultimate sacrifice. But we should also remember those who came back. I have had the privilege of taking many funerals from those who went away to fight for the life they wanted to protect at home. Many brave men had problems of adjustment on returning. As the numbers of these diminish, they too should not be forgotten. Also, there were those who stayed behind, who lived through bombing and constant uncertainty. I have been privileged to have talked with many, mainly women, who fit into this category. Their, "well we just got on with it" mentality for survival is also something to be recalled and admired. My impression with talking to people who lived through these years and to their families is that there was a great sense of dedication and commitment to the style of life that needed to be cherished, preserved and defended.

In 2008 the local Church of England, Catholic, Elim and United Reformed Church churches will be involved with Hope 2008. This is a nationwide initiative by churches across the denominations to bring Hope to local communities. We will be engaged with a whole number of activities that are still in the planning stage. If you have any thoughts on how we can celebrate our local community, those whose dedication and commitment give it life, and look at ways of developing community spirit in the name of Jesus Christ, then I would love to hear from you.

On a recent trip to Poland, I was so encouraged to learn how the churches had played a significant role in their local communities during the communist period. I learnt the same some years ago in Romania. I am planning a trip to Cyprus, where I know the church has had a significant role throughout history. The preservation of our ancient churches throughout over 900 years has shown the dedication and commitment of our communities to the teaching of Jesus, the impact it can and should make on our lives and the importance of the values they so clearly demonstrate. A recent American visitor was overwhelmed by our local church buildings and all they should express. Above all they show God's dedication and commitment to his people, expressed through the death and resurrection of Jesus..

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*.