+WEEKLY REFLECTION

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org

Share the Joy!

I like a good detective series on the TV. It is one of the few things that my wife and I can agree on watching together as she loves a courtroom drama which is not my cup of tea and I love sci-fi and fantasy which she thinks is just weird!

A detective series we can generally agree on. One of the things I notice about a good number of these is how many have a church in the setting, particularly if they are set in some sleepy village community, and whenever a church is portrayed, it is generally presented as a place of no attendance and utter boredom along with some rather grumpy and unpleasant people who are self-serving.

As we move towards the launch of our new vision for the Diocese of 'Joyful Followers of Jesus' we have had many conversations about how this will be received and what people will think. There will be plenty of people who have a vision of God's people as people who are like the TV detective series portrayals, and I dare say there are perhaps a few who live up that portrayal.

However, Jesus in this week's Gospel gives us a clear recipe for how we can be 'Joyful Followers of Jesus' and present to others the joy of serving Him. In the Gospel reading, Jesus confirms to the questioning Pharisees and Sadducees that the commandment of the Old Testament is as true as it has ever been.

You must love the Lord your God with everything about you, your heart, soul, mind and strength. But crucially Jesus adds the next bit in order to show that loving God needs to be expressed in our actions and love for others.

As Christians we can sit behind closed doors and love God, but if we don't live that out, share that love, love others as we do ourselves, then we simply cease to be a people of joy.

As saved people we can know the deep-rooted peace and hope that makes up our joy (even when times are not so happy) and when we serve others, we share what it is that has given us joy - the saving work of Christ on the cross.

So, as we move to share a vision of Joyful Followers of Jesus, let's seek to love God fully, spending time in prayer and scripture and let's demonstrate our love for others in our communities in all we do. Share the joy!

Stephen Whittaker, Diocesan Secretary