

"It's for you!..."

East Window, 2003

The Church, like any of us who belong to it, has two purposes – “to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbour as ourselves” – Christ’s two great commandments. For the Church, this can mean first, to love God with all its heart through its worship and life of prayer – for to worship God is humanity’s highest endeavour. And its second purpose as Church is to love our neighbours as ourselves in mission – which is to proclaim the Good News of God’s love in word and action.

That is the purpose of the Church, but the problem is that we are only human and sometimes take our eye off this wonderful two-fold purpose and concern ourselves with silly and irrelevant things. But as I travel from parish to parish each Sunday I can suddenly find that people have given their all in their worship and it really feels as if God has taken that offering and has lifted it above all our expectation. We have tried to love God in our worship and God has loved us for it.

Likewise our mission can sometimes fall short – perhaps we don’t reach out into our community with loving practical service to the needy, so local people don’t hear the Good News of God’s love for them. But sometimes even the smallest of gestures – a Church drop-in centre, a youth club, a lunch club – becomes a resolute, sparkling witness to God’s care and attention in the community. We’re loving our neighbours as ourselves – as Church – and God is delighted to see it.

In parishes across the diocese I meet committed lay people, who in my book are the unsung heroes and heroines, each helping to keep their parish on this two-fold target. These lay people are the Church’s secret weapon – often unseen, but so talented and constant. But in addition to these fine people, the Church also needs those who will give their lives to study and training for Priesthood. For the world around us faces many challenges and the next generation is going to need the Church perhaps as never before if it is to stay true to its God-given destiny.

Our lay members are the Church’s treasure, but we need people at the helm to help steer the Church of England towards that God-given two-fold purpose – for the world’s sake. As important as every Church member is, there is still no higher calling than to priesthood and we rightly honour those who hear that call and follow it.

So the question is: Is God calling you? The answer is: Yes! For God calls each and every one to that two-fold ministry of worship and mission. But what particular part has God for you to play? It could be ordination – or it may be that you know someone who should think about that call, and it is your role to nudge them into thinking more carefully about it. There are lots of calls in Christ’s Church – one of them is for you!

+ *Laurie Bradwell*