

A few words from the Vicar

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)



Last month I said that I would keep our readers up to date regarding the talks that are underway concerning the possibility of our forming a team with St Andrew's, St Thomas & St John's and St Mary's. Nothing much has happened since I wrote last month's article except that our PCC has agreed that its preferred option is for a four parish team of equal partners. Assuming the PCCs of the other churches agree, representatives from all four parishes will now undertake detailed discussions to determine whether such a team is feasible.

What else has been happening?

Well, I'm no longer Chaplain to the Mayor of Bury. Sharon Briggs' term of office finished in June and she is now Deputy Mayor. It has been both a great honour and a privilege to support Sharon during her year of office and I have many cherished memories. For example, I've attended Council meetings, parades, ceremonies, memorial services, fund raising events and I've accompanied Sharon on official visits such as to the new Sculpture Gallery, the Fusiliers' Museum and the Transport Museum. I even enjoyed a ride in a vintage bus and, yes, I did get to ride in the Mayor's limo!

By attending Council meetings I learnt that when, during a debate, a councillor says, "I'll be brief," they're anything but! From talking to individual councillors I learnt that, no matter how heated the debate got within the Council Chamber, there is no animosity outside.

Things are quite high tech these days too. Council meetings are broadcast live over the internet and there is a continuous official commentary of the proceedings over Twitter (@BuryCouncil if you're interested). This is supplemented by a veritable Twitter-storm of Tweets from journalists, councillors and members of the public!

As Mayor, Sharon worked very hard serving the people of Bury and, of course, she continues to work hard for all of us both as our Deputy Mayor and as one of our ward councillors. And Sharon isn't alone in this; our other ward councillors (Jane Lewis and Peter Bury) work hard for us too!

As a nation we have always viewed our politicians with a healthy degree of cynicism, so theirs will never be the most respected of professions. (As a reader of *Private Eye*, I'm not surprised!) Yet, it is all too easy to forget that, whatever their party allegiance, councillors, MPs and MEPs work hard to serve and represent their communities. As Mayor's Chaplain I have witnessed some of this hard work at first-hand.

Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, calls upon all Christians to pray for those who hold public office. This is the reason why our weekly intercessions list includes prayers for the Queen, the Government, our MP (Ivan Lewis) and our local councillors. It is our Christian duty to

pray for them. Indeed, we should pray for the individuals concerned regardless of whether we agree with them or how we cast our vote.

Paul was writing as a Roman citizen at a time when Nero was Emperor; an arbitrary and self-serving ruler who burnt Rome to the ground so that he could extend his palace. Nero blamed the Christians for his own evil actions and had many of them put to death in the arena. So Paul's urging his Christian readers to pray for Nero and the officials in his government was a big ask!

Well, whatever your opinion of them, none of our politicians is anything like as bad and, as we cast our eyes around the rest of this planet, we really ought to be grateful that in this country we live under the rule of law in a Parliamentary democracy.

So, next the time you feel like criticising a politician (or politicians in general), don't forget to pray for them too!

Every Blessing

Dave