

A few words from the Vicar

One of the great things about churches in our neck of the woods is the annual Walk of Witness.

At one time every church and chapel would hold an annual walk around Whitsun. These would be grand occasions in the life of a town or village. Congregations, Sunday schools, rose queens with their retinues, uniformed organisations, robed choirs and clergy would all process around the local streets singing as they went. Processions would often be led by a brass band hired for the occasion and banners would be held high.



A Whit Walk in Bolton circa 1931

Sadly, in some parishes these days this tradition is nothing more than a fond memory for some of the older folk.

Well, for my money some traditions are worth preserving and this is one of them! So, I'm glad to say that I've come to a parish where the annual Walk of Witness is very much alive and well.

Even better, the tradition has been improved upon. Rather than hold separate walks, Christ Church and Ainsworth Methodist Church have held a joint walk around the village for many years now. By doing this we send out a clear message to everyone that, despite our differing traditions, we are united as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Many years ago I was churchwarden in another parish and it was my job to organise the route of our walk and liaise with the Police. One year I came under pressure from the local police to abandon the idea of walking. I'm not sure what lay behind their change in policy but the suggestion came that we might be better off meeting in a local park for health and safety reasons. "Not on my watch" I said. The annual Walk of Witness in that parish had taken place year after year for generations without mishap and I wasn't going to go down in history as the churchwarden who'd pulled the plug on it!

Why do I feel so strongly about this wonderful tradition? Well, for me these walks are not just about a pleasant stroll around the parish. They are an important act of witness. For when we take part in the walk, in a very simple way, we are making a public declaration of our faith in Jesus. What's more, as we walk around the village, we remind ourselves that we are part of the community we are called to serve in the love of Christ.

This year our Walk of Witness (complete with brass band) will take place on 12th June and begins at 10.30am at Ainsworth Church and Community Hall.* Why not come and join us? Or if you like, come and watch us (just listen out for the brass band and you will know where we are).

And after the walk you are more than welcome to join us for a picnic on Ainsworth Recreation Ground (bring your own food).

* There will be a service in Ainsworth Methodist Church for those unable to join us for the walk.

Every Blessing

Dave