

## A few words from the Vicar ....

In February I attended a clergy formation day which was all about funerals.

Now I should explain that at any gathering of clergy (I'm not sure what the collective noun is – suggestions on a postcard please) it doesn't take long before the conversation turns to funerals. So, as you can imagine, we were in our element!



I didn't really learn much that was new for me over the course of the day but I was reminded that conducting funerals remains a very important aspect of the mission of the Church of England in this country.

The C of E is the Established Church and parochial clergy (like me) have pastoral responsibility (the 'cure of souls') for all within our patch. And conducting funerals and preparing the dying for their death is an important part of the pastoral care the C of E provides to all who want it, regardless of their Church attendance.

Since pre-history funerals have been an important milestone in the grieving process and it's through the C of E's funeral ministry that the Church is able to touch the lives of the bereaved with God's love. At funerals we help the bereaved to celebrate the life of their love one and commend the dead person to God in the context of the new life available to all who accept it through Jesus Christ.

Well, I don't know about you (and I don't wish to sound morbid) but whenever I attend a funeral I'm reminded that, one day, the corpse in the coffin will be mine. The fact is funerals provide us with an opportunity to ponder upon our own mortality in an age when death is the great taboo. These days we don't like to be confronted by our mortality and the mortality of those whom we love but, as Psalm 103 so eloquently reminds us:

*As for mortals, their days are like grass;  
they flourish like a flower of the field;  
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,  
and its place knows it no more.  
(Psalm 103:15-16)*

All this could be quite depressing if it wasn't for the Christian hope we have in Jesus!

As we enter March we are counting down to Easter Day when we will be celebrating Jesus' resurrection; his bursting from the tomb and his conquest of death.

Why is this important? Well, as St Paul reminds us, '*Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.*' (1 Corinthians 15:20) In other words, those who choose to follow Jesus can look forward to sharing in his resurrection.

No wonder Easter is the great Christian celebration. The fact is we Christians are an Easter people who look forward to our own Easter Day, our own resurrection. And, because of this,

we can live our lives to the full in the knowledge that death is not the end but something we must pass through to experience the life, the eternity in God's love that is to come.

As Jesus said:

*'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.'* (John 11:25-26)

Every Blessing

*Dave*