



June 2021

Reverend Susan writes:

As one door closes another opens



“When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us”. That quote is attributed to Alexander Graham Bell, the Scottish-born scientist, inventor and engineer who amongst other things is often credited with being the inventor of the first practical telephone.

It isn't a direct quote from the Bible but it does seem to me that it's very true to life. It can often be true in relationships, when a relationship ends for whatever reason. It can certainly be true in the world of work, where people can find it hard to move on, especially if they were in their previous job for a long time. And I'm sure that many of us have found it to be true when it comes to the life of the church.

People can spend a lot of time looking back nostalgically to the way things used to be. They may look back to a golden age when you had to put extra chairs in the aisles of the church to fit everyone in at Harvest or Christmas. They may look back to styles of service they have known and loved and regret that things are not as they used to be. However, one thing that is often true is that nostalgia can become the enemy of progress. It can blind our eyes to the doors that are open in front of us now, to the opportunities that are there to enable the church to move forward and to all the possibilities for change and growth that are within our reach today. It is far better to acknowledge the doors that have closed behind us and to look forward with faith and expectancy to the open doors ahead.

On the 1st of June the new Benefice of Chelsfield with Green Street Green and Pratts Bottom comes into being. Much will remain the same with two parishes, two PCC's and a range of different styles of worship.



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Yet there will be some changes; I will become Rector of the Benefice and the Rev Michael Gentry will be licensed later this year as Associate Rector. The two parishes will have a new formal relationship, which will hopefully grow in strength as we all get to know each other better.

I believe that we are entering into a time of great opportunity in terms of the life of our benefice. It is clear that each of our churches have their mission priorities but the opportunity lies before us to see where we can collaborate more fully in God's church across the benefice.

We need to remain open minded to different approaches of being church; indeed both parishes are already using social media to engage with people beyond our church walls and we are hoping to explore further opportunities of less formal worship such as "Messy Church" in the future.

Whatever our personal preferences may be we should remember St Paul's words: "I become all things to all people that I might save some of them by whatever means are possible" (1 Corinthians 9 v 22).

For all of us in our individual lives there are doors of opportunity that are open in front of us. They may not be the same shape, or look the same, as the doors that we are used to, but those opportunities are there nonetheless. The same thing is also very true in the life of each of our churches.

As individuals and as churches let us be careful not to be those who simply look back nostalgically to the doors that have closed behind us. Instead let us seek to look forward with faith and vision and be open to the new opportunities and the new doors that will open in front of us. This is the only way to keep moving forward in our own lives and the lives of our churches. May God guide and inspire us as we seek to do that.

Rev Susan



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