

OURSELVES YOUR SERVANTS FOR JESUS'S SAKE

*A Pastoral Letter for the Teulu Asaph
from Bishop Gregory : July 15th 2021*

I have written elsewhere about the impact that the ordinations at Petertide always have on me. We claim the lives and service of another generation of individuals to become dedicated witnesses to Christ in the ordained ministry, a ministry of Word and Sacrament. It is strange then to see our sister Church over the border become embroiled in controversy in this season. Apparently, the Head of Church Planting for the Church of England set a target for 10,000 lay led new churches at an online conference supported by many of us in the diocese in recent weeks, but sparked off controversy not because of the ambitious number he set, but because he described these churches as being without the limiting factors of "a building and a stipend and long, costly, college-based training for every leader of the church".

He's got a point – the earliest Church met not in specially constructed buildings, but in people's homes. There were no stipendiary ministers (even the apostle Paul grumbles in his letters from time to time about having to make his own living), no discernment panels and no theological colleges. Yet God gave the growth. I sometimes feel we could learn a great deal from being bold like the early Church, and seed groups meeting in homes right across the diocese, who would come together to read the Bible, pray, and support one another's faith. When we were baptised, we were all made partakers in the great royal priesthood of Christ, and sanctified as witnesses to new life in him. It can be done, let's get on with it ...

So why did we bother with all the palaver of the ordinations in the Cathedral in these last few weeks – putting people through two or three years of training and formation, ordaining them not once but twice, a year apart, and asking them to serve curacies?

Being a Church among the family of the Churches of the Anglican Communion, the Church in Wales believes that God speaks to us not just in Scripture (although the Bible takes first place as our authority, as it is God's Word), but also through Reason (our God-given ability to think) and through the lived wisdom and experience of Christians for twenty centuries, known by the shorthand term "Tradition". We believe that all three are given by God to enrich and support our faith, and that the way that the Church has evolved over those centuries was led by the Holy Spirit to give a robustness to the Church, and a royal road to holiness and to Christian victory. The Holy Spirit didn't quit with the death of the apostles, or the authorship of Scripture.

Of course a lay-led community of believers meeting in 83, Acacia Avenue can flourish and grow disciples deep rooted in Christ. We could do with more of them. However, Anglicans also believe that if such groups are to be sustained and nurtured and formed into an enduring worshipping and witnessing communities, then they also need to be fortified by deeply rooted understandings born of sustained study of the Bible, and the nourishment of the Sacraments instituted by Christ, so that we recognise that a sacred priesthood, configured to the High Priesthood of Christ, and gathered around the bishop, is among the gifts of God to his Church. "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." (2 Corinthians 4.5), and, as the motto of the Scottish Episcopal Church asserts, "Evangelical Truth AND Apostolic Order".

The Perfect Pastor



The Perfect Pastor preaches exactly 10 minutes. He condemns sin roundly, but never hurts anyone's feelings. He works from 8 a.m. until midnight, and is also the church janitor.

The Perfect Pastor makes \$40 a week, wears good clothes, drives a good car, buys good books, and donates \$30 a week to the church. He is 29 years old and has 40 years' worth of experience. Above all, he is handsome.

The Perfect Pastor has a burning desire to work with teenagers, and he spends most of his time with the senior citizens. He smiles all the time with a straight face because he has a sense of humor that keeps him seriously dedicated to his church. He makes 15 home visits a day and is always in his office to be handy when needed.



The Perfect Pastor always has time for church meetings and all of its committees, never missing the meeting of any church organization. And he is always busy evangelizing the unchurched.

The Perfect Pastor is always in the next town over! If your pastor does not measure up, simply send this notice to six other churches that are tired of their pastor, too. Then bundle up your pastor and send him to the church at the top of your list. If everyone cooperates, in one week you will receive 1,643 pastors. One of them should be perfect.

Have faith in this letter. One church broke the chain and got its old pastor back in less than three months.

