

Jesus said Come to me all that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.

I think we have all carried heavy burdens over the last few months and I am so grateful to be here with you now in a position that I may follow Jesus' example and try to give you rest.

I was blessed to meet some of last year when I did my placement at the Ness group, but for those of you I haven't met, my name is Lisa (at some point – God willing – Rev'd Lisa) and it is my honour to serve you over the next few years as your assistant curate. What does that mean? Well it means that I will reach out to you to attend to your pastoral needs. It means that I will serve in each of the Churches, when we get back there, and it means that I want to get to know you all and have an opportunity to recognise and affirm your gifts, talents and calling. What it doesn't mean is that I will be with you full time – I have a job at Mind in Peterborough which is part of my response to God's calling on my life.

I have experienced some wonderful missional moments at my job – times when I have been able to model what it means to be a servant of God, and times when I have really connected with people. There was one lady who had told me she had no faith but she reached out to me when her brother died – asked whether we could light a candle together at the time of his funeral, a funeral she could not attend because of lock down, and whether I would say some prayers for him. Afterwards she told me that she used to have faith but had lost it, but this was the closest she had felt to God for decades. And that is why I am going to ask you to understand that, whilst I want to be with you whenever you need me, that is not what God is asking of me, rather God is asking that I extend my ministry to the secular world too.

And I think that should be the case for us all. One of the benefits of lockdown is that, rather than once a week, heading off to Church on a Sunday morning, we have welcomed the Church into our homes, our studies, our lounges, maybe even in to our bedrooms – I wish I could see your faces to know who has watched the archbishop in their jimjams! And we have been able to choose the type of service we attend, maybe we even choose to fast forward through some of it – although I trust you are not fast forwarding this bit!

Perhaps what we have collectively realised is that Church doesn't mean inside a building, however beautiful and prayerful that building may be. We need to 'be' the Church, to embody what it means to be Christian, and we can't do that if we restrict how we think about our Christianity to 2 hours, one day a week. Jesus said of His generation they are like children sitting in a market place calling to one another 'We played the flute for you and you did not dance, we wailed for you and you did not mourn'. Is that the sort of disciples we want to be? Yes, we can put a poster up inviting people to Church, but if they don't come what then?

I know that so many of you live out the Gospel in your everyday lives, and that is amazing, I am sure many of you will have gone above and beyond helping out neighbours and the vulnerable during the lockdown, and that is wonderful, but what I've noticed is that God will always push us that little bit harder, He knows what we are capable of, it is usually us that has the doubts. My doubts have been huge over the last few months, I worry that I won't have enough energy to fulfil all that is asked of me, I worry that I won't live up to your expectations, I worry that I won't live up to my own expectations! Mostly I worry that I won't live up to the expectations of God. And so all I can do is call on my faith and ask the Lord to ease my burden, to trust that He will support me, to trust that He will help to carry my load.

And the most wonderful thing is that we do not only know that God will ease our burdens Jesus actively invites us to share our load with Him, for in Him we will find rest.