

A few words from the Vicar

During August things slow down a little in Church life, so I am hoping I can spend more time on prayer and reflection; a time to make progress with some of the ideas we have in our Mission Action Plan.

That's the plan, assuming nothing crops up! And, in my experience, something will.

Already, I suspect there will still be a lot of work for me to do around the new data protection regulations (GDPR). Currently this is a pain in the rear end and is taking up a lot of my time. I am tempted to blame the EU for all this extra work (they wrote the regulations) but that would be too easy. The reality is, in today's connected world, most countries will be introducing their own version of GDPR. So, Brexit or no Brexit, we would still need to go through the pain barrier on this one.

Oh, and there is a massive incentive to doing a good job on this one. I don't for one moment believe that we will be inspected any time soon (if ever); we're too small! Nonetheless, the fines for data breaches are eyewatering. Recently, under the previous (UK) regulations, the Bible Society was fined to the tune of £100,000. Their systems were hacked, and sensitive personal data was accessed. Hence the massive fine!

The risk of something going wrong is low but, should something go wrong, the impact upon our finances (and reputation) would be unpleasant, to say the least.

Fortunately, I have lots of prior experience of identifying and controlling risks, interpreting obscure regulations and mapping processes. Yes, I was an Internal Audit manager! So, I am now putting my previous experience to good use.

Some change is inevitable. Already, the names of those who need prayer have been removed for the pewsheet. I am hoping this is a temporary measure until I can devise a slick, GDPR

compliant procedure that would allow us to begin publishing names again. Unfortunately, for now, I don't know the answer to that one.

Not that this has prevented us from praying for people in Church. Of course not, we still do. Even GDPR does not stretch that far!

In some ways, this whole GDPR exercise reminds me of the Christian life. We are called to live holy lives, to avoid sin. That involves a lot of prayer and self-examination. Sometimes it involves costly change as we come to realise that aspects of our lives are wrong and, initially, that change can be very uncomfortable for us.

Under GDPR, if we find that the security of the personal data we hold has been breached, we own up. Likewise, when we sin, we repent and fall upon God's mercy. And we are forgiven, we are restored.

This is where the analogy breaks down because, under GDPR, we are obliged to own up to our transgressions. But, instead of being met with love and forgiveness, we are likely to be clobbered with a fine at the same time as being named and shamed in the press!

The analogy breaks down in another way too. If there is an aspect of your life that troubles you, a persistent sin maybe, the clergy are here to offer you prayer and support, to help you to repentance and to assure you of God's love and forgiveness. And you come to us in the knowledge that the seal of the confessional is absolute.

Unlike the Information Commissioner, our lips are sealed!

Every Blessing

Dave