

A few words from the Vicar

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

Last month I wrote about our well-kept churchyard. I mentioned that it is a place of tranquillity (despite the traffic on Church Street), and how all are welcome to wander in, take a seat and sit awhile, or simply just wander around. That invitation still stands.

I also mentioned that the Diocesan Chancellor has issued regulations governing the churchyard and how, amongst other things, these restrict the items that can be placed on graves. Full details can be found on the parish website at <http://ainsworthparish.org.uk/churchyard.html> . A notice summarising the restrictions is pinned to the Church notice board and is on the rear gate.

Thank you to those who do their best to comply with the regulations. It is much appreciated and helps our team of volunteers, who work hard to keep the churchyard in good shape. Sadly, on a few graves, there are still some non-compliant items. The regulations issued by the Chancellor allow the Church to remove these without notice. We plan to begin this task soon after Easter. The weather should be warmer by then!

Talking of Easter, this month is a time of spiritual preparation as we journey through Lent and Holy Week, towards Good Friday and Easter.

Many give up something for Lent. Although this practice is a pale reflection of the strict Lenten discipline in force many centuries ago, it remains a helpful spiritual exercise (providing we give up something as a spiritual discipline, rather than as an aid to slimming).

I have given up sweets and biscuits. What have you given up?

But, if Lent is a time of spiritual preparation, is it enough to give up sweets, or biscuits or anything else for that matter? Well, the answer to that question is "No!"

Lent is meant to be a time of prayer and reflection as we ponder upon the reality of our sin, offer heartfelt repentance to God and give thanks that, as Jesus, God himself suffered and died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.

So, giving up sweets and biscuits as a Lenten discipline is a start but, given the enormity of what Jesus achieved for us, it does not quite hit the mark.

So, what more can we do during Lent and Holy Week? Here are some suggestions:

- Attend the Lenten and Holy Week Devotional services in Church.
- Come along to 'First Friday' 7.30pm at the Vicarage on 2nd March.
- Be more regular in your worship and make a point of attending all our services from Maundy Thursday through to Easter Sunday.
- Set aside a special time each day to pray and read your Bible. The Gospels are a good place to start.

One final thing, as we ponder upon the reality of our sin and are moved to repentance, we can rightly be left in a sombre mood. Remember, Jesus loves you and has paid the penalty for your sin. Jesus died for you, and if you invite Him into your life, you are forgiven and have new life in Him. This means you have every reason to feel joyful, so smile and make sure you have an enjoyable Lent!

Every Blessing

Dave