

Dear Friends

By the time you read this, Lent will be more than half over but for me, writing this letter, it's only just started. I can still savour the taste of pancakes on Shrove Tuesday and the sight of ash crosses on foreheads on Ash Wednesday. While for you that is a matter of looking back and it is looking forward to Easter that is more likely to be occupying your thoughts.

Directions are important to us. North, south, east and west help us find our way around on a big scale; left and right within our homes. Up and down are important if you're flying an aircraft. But it's not just direction in space that matter, as we've already seen, looking forwards or backwards in time are just as important. We tend to punctuate our lives with events we look forward to and events we look backwards to. All of these help us orient ourselves in our world.

Sometimes people can gain a real insight by changing the directions they think about. When we worship in Church, some people only think about up and down – up towards God and back down towards us. It can be a real eye-opener to remind them that there's a horizontal direction to think about too – the one that links all of us worshipping together. If you remember Jesus' summary of the law, you'll realise that the horizontal is just as important to God as the vertical.

But there's another pair of directions I haven't even mentioned yet, inwards and outwards. They're very apt to consider at this time of year. Lent is a time for thinking inwards, for taking a good hard look at ourselves. That's not just to find faults and to look to improve but also to find God within us. It is in our own hearts and minds that God works and we can learn so much from him by looking inwards.

But Easter, when it comes, is very much an outward looking time. Christ bursts from the tomb and the message goes out into all the world, 'Alleluia, Christ is risen!' The world-changing events of that first Easter went on to explode outwards from the Holy Land and, for us too, the events of Easter remind us that proclaiming the Good News of Jesus is paramount. Our new Mission Team is working hard to look at how we can do that more effectively and they're doing that by looking both inwards and outwards.

So as we move from Lent, through Holy Week into Easter may you have chances aplenty to look inwards to seek God and outwards to proclaim him.

God Bless
Mike