Rector's Blog 19th November 2026

DESTINATION ANYWHERE?.....

The Marvelettes sang this song in 1968 and it was reinvigorated by the band in the 1991 movie *The Commitments.* It's the first song the Irish soul group sing together on a train home after a night out. They are finding their identity and their purpose, and they burst into spontaneous harmony on that Dublin train.

It's a song about a jilted lover buying a ticket to go wherever it will take her – *"East or west I don't care"!* She is heartbroken and just wants to get away. *"This old world aint got no back door"* – in other words there is no way back to the way it was.

This is NOT the Gospel!

The story of Jesus and the rescue mission of God is about restoration and coming back to where we are meant to be.

And that raises a question.

Where do you want us to be in 5 years' time?

Or more importantly, where does God want us to be in 5 years' time? In ten years' time? In 15 years' time?

We are drawing together plans for Celebration 800 with three projects tied into our mission statement.

Growing in Christ – a lasting sign of worship and deepening faith in the form of a stain glassed window

Together with community – a series of event with community partners recognising and celebrating the last 8 centuries of history

Sharing God's love – creating a community space in our church halls

But this is not a destination, instead it is a staging post in the history of the church. Each of us will have their favoured element of the project but overall, all three elements, are intended to both celebrate our history and embed us more deeply in our community.

We should all celebrate every part of the whole that they will be honouring to God and his mission here!

All that we do together sets the trajectory for the mission of these churches.

Now before I say any more I must say, please be assured that I am not counting down the days to retirement!

BUT, the reality is that my tenure will come to an end in 4 or maybe 5 years' time.

Sanderstead Parish will (hopefully) be writing another profile, seeking a new Rector.

What will it say?

Where will we be in 4- or 5-years' time (that is after the 800 Celebrations). What will the legacy be?

What will the direction be?

For me, my prayer is that we will be a group of believers who are "true" and "worship in Spirit and truth" (John 4:24)

We had our Alpha away day – we didn't go away and it wasn't a whole day! BUT it was a significant time of encounter with the very presence of God by his Spirit who was heavy in his presence, experienced by some, most significantly (not for all it must be said).

As we deepen in our encounter with God, deepen in our engagement with his word and press outwards into our community intent on sharing this Good News….

What will this look like in 4- or 5-years' time?

What will you be asking your new Rector to do? To be?

Destination anywhere? Running from where we are?

OR destination Kingdom come here in Sanderstead?

What might that look like?

Let's start asking him and praying into that now.

Ready for the next leg.

I had the privilege to present Rev Blessing to Christ Church Purley. It doesn't happen very often (if ever!) where the Area Dean is the outgoing incumbent!! I spoke to him a couple of times before the service and had a strong sense of "handing over". So I made a mock baton and handed it to him in the service! It was very moving but I think also very pertinent about handing on.

Let's enjoy the ride for the next few years together but also look towards the legacy of the "next leg" that it can be ever more fruitful for the Kingdom, for the Sanderstead community and for the direction God wants to lead us.

Your brother in Christ,
Doug

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