



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

The Parish of St Peter & St Mary New Fishbourne and the Parish of St Mary the Virgin Apuldram

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Dear Parishioners

Recent press releases report that 2,435,000 people are currently unemployed in the UK and in recent weeks several people have spoken to me about their personal employment position: how the repercussions of a global situation have affected their families and how the loss of income has changed their feelings of self-respect. It is almost impossible for many 'British' people to talk freely about their particular experience of being unemployed. For better or for worse, we believe that we have to maintain the 'soldiering on' appearance and a 'Churchillian' philosophy of beach warfare! Personal feelings of sadness and sometimes utter despair have to be packed away from public scrutiny and even our nearest and dearest may be kept at arms length. Expressions of sympathy from friends may well be politely or brusquely pushed away because they may threaten to undermine the fragile façade of stoicism behind which hides a person in pain. I can't begin to really understand what it must be like to be in such a position in today's world. I say 'in today's world' because although there will be similarities to past times, the circumstances of today's world have not been experienced before by anyone. Being unemployed in 2009 is very different to even twenty years ago because of different lifestyle expectations we have developed. But maybe you have been in similar circumstances and can begin to understand the bereavement being endured by neighbours who are threatened with unemployment or who have already been 'shown the door'.

It's that phrase, being 'shown the door' which came to mind the other day following another visit to Tate Britain and the National Gallery. Since my teenage years in art school I have loved the work of the 'Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood'. Brought again to the public's attention through a recent TV series, which features artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt all of whom lived incredibly Bohemian lives and produced countless masterpieces. When I was a Curate in Manchester I regularly stared at one of the church windows, a stained glass copy of Holman Hunt's famous painting entitled 'Light of the World' which depicts Christ standing at a door with a lantern and knocking upon the ivy clad door. Now in the cold light of day when nearly two and a half million are coping with unemployment I wonder if that famous image could be of help.

Could it be that when a person is "shown the door" and told they "cannot be kept on", they have to be "let go" that it might be possible to conceive of Christ being the other side of that proverbial door, waiting to guide you with His light out into a dark night. Could it be that He's offering you employment as He did the first disciples, follow me and I will make you.....

It may be a long dark journey in the night, but He will be with you, as the Psalmist says, 'Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me' (23.4).



Love and Best wishes to you all
Clive

Our aim is to be a Christian faith community, which will provide a spiritual and theological family base from which Christ will be proclaimed by word and example in the wider community, now and in the future