

Sunday 20 June 2021 - Trinity 3

Farewell to Gemma

Sermon Notes

UPHEAVAL

Opening comments

- Upheaval - not a very suitable topic for a farewell sermon - know only too well with pandemic wrecking plans for two summers in a row.
- Not a very cheery topic either - wanting to hear some uplifting words about Gemma as she leaves.
- Wait and see.

Today's reading - the Great Storm

- Certainly an upheaval - a ferocious and scary event. So bad that fishermen turned to Jesus to save them.
- Jesus dealt with the upheaval, replacing it with an upheaval in the disciples' perception of him - who is this ...? Answer: God.

Jesus' ministry generally

- Storm perhaps most dramatic incident, but Gospels full of upheavals of one kind or another.
- Sometimes (like storm) upheaval was an event - entry into Jerusalem, cleansing of Temple.
- Sometimes upheaval of teaching - Sermon on Mount (turn the other cheek); parables (Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son).
- Sometimes, like disciples in storm, of perceptions - James & John - first shall be last etc.

Jesus' world - Judea in 1st century

- Roman occupation - crippling taxation; loss of freedom.
- Jewish society pulled apart - collaboration vs resistance vs just surviving.
- Brutality of Roman rule.
- Crucifixion.
- Upheaval in every way imaginable.

Our world

- Not very different - pandemic caused greatest upheaval since WW2, worldwide.
- Black Lives Matter and me too.
- Evil of extreme nationalism.
- Dangers of social media.
- Violence, oppression, injustice, poverty.
- Upheaval almost seems to be default way of life. All by way of context for ...

The Upheaval of Gemma leaving

- Unlike almost everything else I've mentioned, not really an upheaval at all - it's the destiny, the desire almost, of curates to move on once their curacy is over.
- Should be so grateful for all Gemma's managed to pack into her three years with us.
- From the day of her arrival she took on everything thrown at her.
- Was and is utterly reliable.
- She always exercises sound judgement.
- She has sailed through the onerous requirements of her continuing training without that impacting on her work in the parish.
- First as a deacon and then as a priest, she has given an exemplary model of Christian ministry.
- The Quiet Space services were her idea and their variety and simplicity showed her deep Christian spirituality.
- Her work with schools and young people generally has been brilliant.
- Her technical expertise was all there was between the rest of the Ministry Team and the abyss from the beginning of Lockdown 1 to now.
- She has been the greatest of joys to work with - her on screen and in person persona of approachability, welcoming with a smile, and yet exercising a quiet authority is precisely what she is like all the time.
- We now have to cope with the upheaval of her leaving, but we will just have to try and be as good without her as we were with her.
- She too will have to cope with the upheaval of leaving, moving, setting up home, and learning a lot of new names.
- I'm in no doubt that she'll manage all of those things and that she'll be a huge asset not only to her new parish but to the Diocese of Salisbury and the Church of England as well.
- Thank you Gemma, and may all your upheavals, even if not small, be manageable.

JRE / 13.6.21

Please see below for the prayer and blessing we'll offer Gemma and Michael at their final service next Sunday.

Farewell to Gemma and Michael – 20 June 2021

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Gemma and Michael, on this day of parting and saying goodbye, we thank God for bringing you to this parish three years ago; for all that you have contributed in so many ways to the parish; to individuals in our church congregations; and to the wider community.

We are all sorry that you are leaving, but we are certain that God will bless you both as you settle in to your new benefice, home and surroundings. We offer you this prayer on behalf of all your friends here:

May the Father of Life pour out his grace on you,
May you feel his hand in everything you do,
And be strengthened by the things he brings you through;
This is our prayer for you.

May the Son of God be Lord in all your ways,
May he shepherd you the length of all your days,
And in your hearts may he receive the praise;
This is our prayer for you.

May his Spirit comfort you, and make you strong,
May he discipline you gently when you're wrong,
And in your hearts may he give you a song;
This is our prayer for you. Amen.

And now the blessing:

May all you speak be blessed by God;
May all you hear be blessed by God;
May all you see be blessed by God;
May all you sense and taste be blessed by God;
May each step you take be blessed by God.

May the guarding of God be with you,
The keeping of Christ around you,
The power of his Spirit within you;
To preserve, protect, heal and encourage you
Now and always.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.