

## **A reflection about Reverend Liz Lavelle leaving us.**

*(I was inspired to write this after recently reading an article written by Margaret Sentamu)*

Liz Lavelle has been with us for four years now and is about to move on. She has grown enormously during her time here and her ministry has been immensely valuable. After the end of June Liz will cover Codicote Parish until the end of October. It is hoped that by then interviews for new posts etc will be able to take place and she will be able to find a more permanent move.

...Stepping down from her role here, taking up a new role and looking towards her future ministry.....

I think one of the hardest things as a priest, is when you move into a new role and leave a previous one behind. Relationships have been built, stories have been written and memories have been made. However, as priests we are taught about the importance of the need to let go before we can truly move on. Both we (as a parish) and Liz will experience common themes of loss, sorrow, pain and transition – and all without the opportunity to say goodbye because of the situation we currently find ourselves in. So how do we approach this – psychologically, practically and physically.

Covid 19 is robbing many people of their 'threshold' rituals: leaving school, graduation, even sitting exams, losing loved ones without being able to see them or attend their funerals.

How do we approach such times? How do we mark Liz's departure as she moves on to the next part of her ministry journey?

We all cope with change in different ways, but – whichever way we do it – we must recognise the difficulty we may experience and not take short cuts through the process.

The story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke's gospel is a powerful illustration of this movement of change.

First, recognition: 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' We begin by identifying our loss. We name our experience that this is not the way that we would have wanted to say thank you to Liz for her years of ministry, say goodbye to her, and wish her well for the future.

Second, reflection: 'But we had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.' We need to take time to reflect, time in prayer to give thanks for all that Liz has shared with us, time to reflect on our feelings now, and time to shift mentally to the next phase of life here at St Francis. Liz will need time and space too, to mentally shift from one place to another, to form new relationships within ministry and to leave old ones behind.

Third, ritualization: 'when he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.' We are all missing these acts of ritualization in many aspects of our life at the moment. We can though, take time to write things down, to send Liz a card, to create memories for her of her time with us.

Fourth, reorientation: “They said to each other: ‘were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’” As the connection is made between the place where we are and the God of healing and strength, we find a greater freedom to let go and continue our journey.

When we learn to say goodbye, we truly learn to say to ourselves and to others:

‘Go, God be with you.’

*Rev’d Jenny*

*Liz will be preaching for the Sunday service on the 28<sup>th</sup> June and we will try to set up a zoom café afterwards so people can have a chance to say goodbye to her. Do send me an email if you would like to be included in the Zoom invite.*