

From the Vicarage,



No doubt, like me our readers will have been amazed and appalled by the recent scandal in the news of the flagrant abuse by our elected representatives of their system of expenses. It seems to me in these times of economic crisis that now of all times is when a culture of confidence needs to be permeating through society. However, all that we have heard in past weeks, across all the major parties does anything but spread confidence. If the allegations are found to be with substance then it amounts to our MPs defrauding us, the tax-payers as well as the country as a whole, out of many thousands of pounds.

Let's make no mistake – this is stealing, and on a large scale too, and we are asking ourselves the question, if our representatives in Parliament cannot be trusted in the simple matter of personal financial integrity then are they the people to lead our country out of recession and represent us on the world stage? I for one think not, and if there were a general election now I would find it very hard indeed to select a party to support. This rottenness seems to be across the board – a general epidemic within government, and that's very worrying indeed.

We may not trust everything that we read in the newspapers, but I have so far heard little that refutes the claims being made by the Daily Telegraph and that is not a paper particularly known for its scandal-mongering. My personal belief is that as many of these reports as are finally substantiated should lead to immediate resignations. That would hurt our country greatly because the problem seems to be so wide-spread and large holes would be left and many by-elections would have to be held. Nevertheless, I also believe the alternative is worse. One rotten apple in a bag of good ones soon infects the rest. My hope is that such action would begin to place integrity back on the nation's agenda – an old word that is unfashionable these days, but essential to any proper ordering of society.

By contrast, at a recent mid-week service I spoke on a verse from the letter of the Apostle James which described the utter transparency of our God. Unlike many of our M.Ps. He is totally reliable and His integrity is always completely beyond question. He always has our best interests at heart and works tirelessly to ensure that they are realised. When our best interests are not served we can always be sure that this is not His fault, but that there are other forces at work in the world which are working in the other direction. Over the last few days election literature for the forthcoming local elections have been coming through the door. If our candidates could claim what God can claim then perhaps we would be well on the way to restoring confidence. God is always the pattern we can follow.

In the Church both locally and very widely we were extremely shocked to hear of the sudden death of our Diocesan bishop, The Rt. Rev'd Ian Martin Cundy. We all knew he was ill, of course, but such a sudden passing was not expected and although we can be glad for him because he went as he would want to, very much in action, the shock for his wife Jo, his three adult children and the new grandson is surely a shattering blow. As we remember Ian with huge thanksgiving for his ministry among us in the diocese we hold the family very much in our prayers along with the members of the senior staff. Bishop Frank (suffragan), Bishop of Brixworth now assumes full authority until a permanent appointment is made, while Bishop John Flack (Honourary Assistant Bishop), and the two archdeacons, The Ven. Christine Allsopp (Northampton) and the Ven. David Painter (Oakham) all will assume a much increased load on top of already very busy schedules. Our sincere prayers are much needed for them all.

As far as local Church events are concerned, a big event at the end of April was our women's breakfast, held in Great Doddington Memorial Hall on April 25th and attended by around twenty members of all three churches. The speaker was the Rev'd Alison White, wife of Bishop Frank who, I gather, spoke very well on the theme of making appropriate space in our lives. Not being a woman I wasn't present to hear her, but those who were there emerged at the end responding most enthusiastically to what they had heard. A group of men led by Bhyll Stephenson worked in the kitchen to provide the breakfast (cooked) which was greatly appreciated and our thanks are due to all who helped to make it a great occasion. A similar event for men is currently being planned and a firm date should be announced very soon.

With very best wishes,
Chris Pearson