

WEEKLY SERMON

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Saying farewell after a job well done

It was April 1, 2009 when I started leading the Social Responsibility Department at the Diocese of Blackburn, writes Rev. Canon Ed Saville, our Lead Officer for Social Responsibility, who retired this week.

At that time there were a number of projects being run from the centre of the Diocese, with funds coming from many different – usually one – arm of Government or another.

Most of the work was helping families that were facing difficulties of one form or another; from separated parents, through families with children in difficulties in schools, to those who were either in prison (and coming out) or on probation. Sadly as the austerity struck around the same time, so did the funding cuts.

I have often been asked not only 'Social Responsibility' is but also why I got involved. The second part is a lot easier to answer than the first.

I seem to remember that there was a man called Jesus who spent a lot of time; feeding the hungry, healing the sick, caring for the outcast and despised. That became my driving passion; to live up to the calling to follow as a disciple and serve as He had served.

But still the question remained – what was it about? I once replied, it gave me licence to involve myself in nearly everything, and it has been very stimulating, enjoyable and rewarding.

From small things – from the ACTS 435 initiative; to emergency planning; homelessness; foodbanks and inter-faith relations to recently being involved with The Clewer Initiative – aimed at combating modern slavery. These are just some of the topics that have provided the workload, but with much else alongside.

The most rewarding part though has been the change in the Diocese. I was tasked in 2009 with changing the way that the work was done. Instead of being very central it was to be more dispersed. The centre doing less and the parishes being more involved.

So what happened? In 2017 there were some questions on the 'Statistics for Mission' sheets for parishes, asking about involvement in social action. The results are out and I can tell you that on all measures Blackburn Diocese scores above the national average.

So as I retire, I can only say thank you. Thank you to all those who have taken up the challenge to help those who are in the direst need; thank you to all those who have been helped and responded to the love of God they experienced and above all thank you to the one who showed us the way and who we fail to emulate day after day: Jesus Christ our Lord.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES