

In my former Parish in Camden, London, there are an eclectic mix of shops, one of which goes under the name, 'Transformation'.

In it you can access anything you need in order to change your image. New clothes. A new hairstyle. A tan. Even a tattoo!

Transformation for most is indeed about outward appearance. It's skin deep. It's a new frock and nice hairdo. But as Christians we need to go much further.

The Church of England in Lancashire has a new 'Vision 2026' which places at its heart a call for the 'transformation' of our communities. If you are reading this column today but don't attend church, this may be language that is unfamiliar to you.

For many people, I suspect, transformation will be thought of in the context of being outward and cosmetic. It is about enhanced presentation rather than substance; about mild improvement rather than permanent change.

But as Christians, what we mean by 'transformation' is infinitely more profound as we see vividly demonstrated to us at Easter. A stone is rolled back. Obsolete grave clothes lie on a stone slab. A grief-stricken woman is called by name. A dead body comes back to life. Jesus is alive. It is Resurrection.

The transformation that we seek as Christians is anything but skin-deep, as we see whenever we confront the risen life of Jesus.

This is the transformation our Vision calls for. It is not cosmetic, it is fundamental. It is not just about the survival of the institutional Church, but a renewed world in which all men and women find redeemed life in Christ.

It is not just about a bag of free food for those who live in poverty, but a society in which the needs of the poor come first.

Whilst the priorities we set as Churches must be realistic and achievable, at the same time the scale of the project that the Lord has entrusted to us is immense. Our task is the transformation of a nation in the name of the Risen Christ. Nothing less will do.

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