

Proud to be British

Because...Only in Britain... can a pizza get to your house faster than an ambulance.

Only in Britain... do supermarkets make sick people walk all the way to the back of the shop to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front.

Only in Britain... do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a DIET coke.

Only in Britain... do banks leave both doors open and chain the pens to the counters.

Only in Britain... do we leave cars worth thousands of pounds on the drive and lock our junk and cheap lawn mower in the garage.

Only in Britain... do we use answering machines to screen calls and then have 'call waiting' so we won't miss a call from someone we didn't want to talk to in the first place.

Only in Britain... are there disabled parking places in front of a skating boarding park.

NOT TO MENTION.....3 Brits die each year testing if a 9v battery works on their tongue.

142 Brits were injured in 1999 by not removing all pins from new shirts.

58 Brits are injured each year by using sharp knives instead of screw drivers.

31 Brits have died since 1996 by watering their Christmas tree while the fairy lights were plugged in.

9 Brits have died in the last 3 years believing that Christmas decorations were chocolates.

British Hospitals reported 4 broken arms last year after cracker pulling accidents.

101 people since 1999 have had broken parts of plastic toys pulled out of the soles of their feet.

8 Brits had serious burns in 2000 trying on a new jumper with a lit cigarette in their mouth.

A massive 543 Brits were admitted to A& E in the last two years after opening bottles of beer with their teeth.

5 Brits were injured last year in accidents involving out of control Scalextric cars.

And finally.....In 2000 eight Brits cracked their skull whilst throwing up into the toilet

Doesn't it make you proud to be British? Actually, this is a fine country to live in, I just wish people would respect each other and each other's needs more.

You see it in small everyday things.

Like when you go to supermarkets and those people that park in disabled bays, even when they are not at all disabled and have no sticker in their car. They don't believe the rule applies to them.

The same with mobile phones. It's illegal to drive and use a mobile phone, unless it's hands-free. But how many people just don't think that rule applies to them.

And at roundabouts, where there are clear signs painted on the tarmac which point, say, left and who proceed to drive right. That rule doesn't apply to them either.

And I'm thinking, if they don't take notice of signs and instructions at Tesco's or on the gyratory, where else do they ignore the rules.

I guess that's why we have speed cameras and magistrates courts and ASBO's, in an attempt to maintain law and order.

But people can choose to be law abiding or they can choose not to. Cameras, restraining order and prisons can act as a deterrence, but at the end of the day, people are free to ignore the rules and subsequently pay the price if caught.

And that's only laws about driving, about being good citizens. What about God's law. Do we have a choice there. Well, of course, the answer again is "yes" we do and throughout human history right from the earliest days we have broken the rules.

Why did God set us up to fall? Why make such strict rules that he must have known we would not be able to adhere to?

Well the answer is so simple. We have rules on the roads for our safety. If there was not a rule that states that we drive on the left hand side of the road it would be chaos. We have speed limits for our well being and that of others.

And in the same way, we know that God's rules are there to enable us to live together and with Him in love and unity.

Those rules, beginning with the 10 commandments, are there to guide our lives before God and one another.

When Jesus came, he made it so simple:

Love God, neighbour and self.

Simple.

How we work that out in the 21st Century is part of our journey to discover, in matters great and small. For home, for church and for our society.

For me, when I look at the life and ministry of Jesus, I see him working his ministry not through a political movement, not through a religious institution but in people's homes, people's streets, fields and lakes. In one to one encounters... that's how he changed the world. Chasing away demons in people's lives, healing the sick, comforting the bereaved and outcast. It's all one to one stuff.

And if we want to be proud of being British, then the church's ministry must, I believe, model that of our Lord. I believe that it is as Christians love and care for those around them that a little piece of God's Kingdom is planted in the United Kingdom. That way the world is transformed.

So for me when we welcomed all the new members into the life of the church, part of me was very proud that our ecumenical church here is one of the growing churches in Aylesbury, probably one of the fastest. But that's not the

point. Yes, it's great to belong to a thriving Christian Community where we see before our eyes month on month new people joining us to worship and join our fellowship of love and care. But to sit back and feel satisfied that this has been a "good job, well done" is to fundamentally miss the point.

The bible does not say "for God so loved the church that he gave his only son..."

It says he loves the **world so much** yes, that place of sin and selfishness, greed and corruption. That world with all its brokenness and misery. He loves that world, our world, one world.

And our task is to see the church and a stepping stone to mission and service.

When I read the names and addresses of all our new members a couple of weeks ago, I was so pleased because I see them as ambassadors not of the church but of the kingdom. Back in their homes, in their communities, in their schools, in their places of work, they represent Christ and his values. They will try to follow Christ's call to love and serve, just as he did.

And this is how the Kingdom will advance and grow. And this power of love for Good will be stronger the forces of darkness in the hearts of those who seek to overthrow our values and beliefs.

And what Christmas here at church taught me... there are many people who may not regard themselves as church goers but who are searching for spiritual values as evidenced by the crowds of people we welcomed here at Christmas. Those people live next door to you, work with you, attend the same schools as you do. As we live a

Christian live we are witnessing to the love of God made known in that little baby born in Bethlehem.

In so doing we find ourselves in a win win situation:

- Our homes, community becomes a better place to be, where love and care challenges and defeats animosity and selfishness
- Our Church will grow as other are attracted to Christian values
- We will be blessed as God declare to us “well done you good and faithful servants”

I don't think I can remember a time when I have felt as optimistic about this green and pleasant land. I believe that the time is coming when the church will see a revival in it's life and influence for good. We are seeing pockets of that revival here and there and what I say is that if the church can grow in a modern place like this, it can everywhere. And it will grow not through clever use of technology, witty and eloquent sermons, or even a church review.

They might all help in various ways, but the Church will grow when we keep to the rules human and divine.

So lets go to love and serve the Lord.

Amen.