

Ramblings from the Rectory

September 2017

Have you ever been somewhere where you feel completely out of place; the odd one out. It doesn't happen to me too often in this country, but it does happen. I've felt it in a pub at the other end of Norfolk. I don't know whether any of those isolated places still exist but they did twenty odd years ago. I remember going into that village pub, and everything went quite, so quite you could hear a pin drop. No one spoke, and then every face turned round. They turned to look at the stranger, the foreigner who had invaded 'their' village and worse still had entered 'their' private pub.

As I said, it is rare for me to feel like an outsider in this country, but those rare times do give me a tiny glimpse into the world of the foreigner. It makes me wonder about the black person, or the Asian person in this very white part of England. It also makes me wonder how someone would feel if I walked into a church for the first time. In my imagination, there I am, entering a world that's new to me. I have no idea what's going to happen. Will these church-goers be hostile? Will they judge me for not being like them? What do I do with this book in my hands? Where do I sit? They don't expect me to sing do they?! Maybe, I feel uncomfortable and alone. Perhaps I can escape now.

I can honestly say that these 7 churches have a good foundation of welcome to build upon. Though I think we forget the immensity of the task that we have. Jesus' task for us to share the wonderful news of God's love with the people of this country.

I read the sad story of a bear that paced up and down the twenty feet of its cage. When, five years later it was rescued, the bear continued to pace up and down those twenty feet, as if the cage was still there. It was. For him.

That is how so many people are when it comes to the freedom of faith. They have been pacing up and down in a life without their Creator for so long that they can't see the freedom of the Spirit, right there for them to walk into. Our job as Christians is to find ways to welcome people into a world that's more than twenty feet long.

God bless, Nigel.