

LETTER FROM CAROLE LEWIS, LAY READER



In such turbulent times I am tempted to ignore all the bad stuff and simply write something bland and soothing for our August magazine, but in all conscience I cannot. I do hope the following might give you fresh heart though.

Over the door of a little church in Leicestershire, England can be found this inscription:

"In the yeare: 1653 when all things sacred were throughout ye nation either demollisht or profaned Sr Robert Shirley Barronet Founded this Church whose singular praise it is to have done the best things in ye worst times And hoped them in the most calamitous."

Sir Robert Shirley was imprisoned and died in the Tower shortly after founding this church. If you're not sure what was going on in 1653, I can assure you that it was truly horrendous. There are of course far more of us now, our publicity is instant and our methods of hurting others more sophisticated and wide reaching, but human nature has not changed. Hatred, bigotry, pride and self seeking are still at the root of our human mess.

This inscription reminds me of the challenge to the church yesterday, today and tomorrow: still to "do the best things in the worst times and hope them in the most calamitous".

Here's one up to date example for you out of many: the vicar of the church of St Clements was woken at 3am by a fellow priest who had just fled from the London tower block as it became a deathly inferno. He went down to the church immediately, opened the door and put on the lights and people began to come in out of the dark, both to give and receive unconditional, unquestioning and effective help, hope and comfort. "The best things in the worst times" . Hugely encouraging and a great act of witness.

"The worst times" may often be less public though. Many individuals have their own private experiences of personal hell too. "The best things" may even be simply standing alongside, weeping with those who weep. We may well get it wrong, but our challenge is still the same: to do "the best things in the worst times and hope in the most calamitous", sustained by the light and love of God which we bear for every-one, everywhere.

Carole