

About Ministry – Rev. Richard Atkinson

Dear Friends

I hope to start a meaningful conversation. I want to stress there is no hidden agenda here, rather an attempt to engage the church in reflecting on the communal journey we share. Here are some broad brushstrokes, in the hope that, through discussion and prayerful consideration, some detail may emerge. The aim is for there to be a time for folk to come together and share their wisdom as we strive to discern the forward path to which our God is calling

Firstly, to think on ‘what is a Minister for?’

About 20 years ago, the Connexion produced a DVD to encourage folk to answer this question. In that time ministry has changed, legislation has had an impact, new ways of working have emerged, and in many places resources are more stretched. So,

what should be the churches’ core expectations, and importantly, why should that be? Even since Helen left the position has changed, so that all ministers are now involved in a process of supervision, which will take time. So, what is a Minister for?

Secondly, ‘what does it mean to be a church family?’

If you read Acts 2:42-47 you will find the earliest picture of the primitive church; it has become a template for the church throughout the ages. The New Testament is full of advice about building community, how we should relate to each other, and there is huge stress on the need to be ‘one’. So, there is the question ‘how well do we know each other?’ Are we ‘one’ or a series of congregations? Do the saints above relate to the saints below? Do those who sit on the right have much to do with those on the left? These may seem simple questions but they have great importance. How well do we know each other and what can we do to enhance our awareness of the others who share our pilgrimage? Or in more simple terms, where do we eat together and have fun together? How do we grow in love and understanding? How, together, do we keep an eye out for the absent or the distressed?

Thirdly, ‘what it is to be a diverse community?’

I am not sure how many countries are represented in our community, but we have to ask ourselves how well we reflect our diversity. Those who

have not been at AMC all their lives bring a rich history to us., The experience of church in other places needs to inform the way we worship and share together. We need a mechanism by which voices can be heard and opportunities considered, in the hope of building up who we are and so celebrating the richness that is part of us. So, what could we learn from other congregations’ ways of being church? How do we seek to make AMC a place where our diversity is seen in who we are?



And then, given the chance, what else might you say to the church?

The easiest thing would be for this to become an excuse for a full-blooded whinge about the insignificant, a diatribe about the wrong hymn tune or the welcome stewards' taste in shirts. What ideas do you have? What questions would you like to ask? There is a real importance in building channels of communication to allow, and here is an important word, positive reflections on issues that have importance for folk within our community. To give some examples: I have been asked why I am not at AMC each week, why do the choir sing an introit, through to questions about our response to the homeless and why certain people have certain roles? Where is our place to share, to ask of ourselves in the hope of refining who we are for the better?

So, a conversation, a chance to look closely at who we are and why we do things the way we do? All designed to help us evolve, to find something of the dynamism of the Divine.

In my diary I have set aside the evening of Monday 2nd December to allow a conversation. I will be at church, happy to listen and talk to whoever else wants to come. It would be really helpful, if people had particular thoughts, questions or ideas, to have some advance notice so a pattern can be worked out for the night. The gathering will give opportunity to think, to listen, to share, to build.

I may sit on my own which could be interesting; hopefully though, we can begin a conversation that might change us all for the advancement of the Gospel.

Richard.