



February 2019

Dear Friends,

When the word “church” comes up in conversation, the first thing we think of is a building. We have this mindset that church is a place people go to for Sunday worship, weddings, christenings and funerals. Church has traditionally been a place to gather and worship - a stone building with a steeple.

Some have rejected that traditional church image - opting instead to gather in other places. For example when I was in Stratford-on-Avon I set up a ‘church’ that met mid-week in a local coffee-shop, and a clergy friend of mine, who’s church roof collapsed, moved their worship services to the local pub and the old people’s home. We ourselves have moved our services in Fenny Compton to the village hall and the Methodist Church since the led theft in September. No meeting place is superior to another, but even without the steeple and church sign, many of us still think of “church” as a place we go.

However, in the bible, ‘church’ isn’t a building or a day. Church is always a reference to people, and the way they live in community together. It’s not a place. The church of the bible is a body of believers, a group of warm and loving people that aim to live out the Gospel supporting one another in their words and actions. Early Church folk would be confused at the phrase, “go to church.” They understood themselves to be the Church. It wasn’t a building or tent. It was them.

Today there are those for whom ‘church’ - by that I mean the attending of church services and worshipping in a church building - is important. Sunday worship helps to focus and rekindle their faith, to fuel them to live it the rest of the week. On the other hand, there are those who don’t or rarely attend church, who believe in God, have a faith and live a very christen life. Perhaps they don’t feel comfortable in church, or feel the services aren’t relevant to them or Sunday is a family time, full of too many other things. I often think people have a faith but it’s the institution they don’t like. I get that. Even as a vicar I often kick against the institution, it’s practices and requirements.

I worry about the churches future. Our congregations are small and a building with no worshipers cannot really be a church in the biblical sense. However, the recent concern and interest in what’s happening with the church building at Fenny Compton reinforces to me how important a ‘building’ the church is to those who regularly attend worship, those who don’t and those who want it available at certain times in their life - weddings, christenings and funerals. If you want to discuss any of this please do contact me. I’m open to suggestions and ideas in how we can ‘be church’ in the community, worship in church and once the roof is replaced keep the church building open as a centre of worship for the community.

*Rev'd Nicki*