

April Team Letter

'Remember that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return'

These words are used for the beginning of the period of Lent and at funerals. I smile and regret that my body will not have the old priestly privilege of being buried under the church path. In this season which leads up to the Resurrection of Jesus that is celebrated on Easter Sunday, we are called to remember that God formed us out of the earth and will return us to that same earth. In this way there is a beautiful completeness in the cycle of life.

My atoms and molecules are not just my own; they are shared throughout generations changing by 98% every year.

As with Jesus' followers, it is our memories that are the true source of our veneration of those who have gone before us. That place where we put the body is only a temporary resting place as those atoms return to the earth. Look closely in your local church graveyard, you will see that it is a myth that a grave is bought for eternity

Out of respect for the living, the law requires us to wait before re-using graves.

Out of respect for the dead, we care for the graveyards according to law displayed inside most churches. A graveyard is for all and the laws governing their use is to protect all.

We need to remember with love those who have gone before us in a healthy and life giving way. The Christian belief is that when the person dies, they are no longer present. When Jesus said those harsh words, 'Leave the dead to bury the dead,' we need to understand that in the context of his tears at the death of Lazarus his friend. A healthy balance!

Thus, when as Rector I am asked if we can overflow into a churchyard for a funeral, my first consideration is allowing the family and friends of the dead person their opportunity to grieve as Jesus did. It is a decision made out of respect, not disrespect as has been suggested in recent papers. And yes, on occasion, we will provide refreshment to people who have often travelled great distances, out of courtesy to both the living and the memory of the dead person.

As we come closer to Easter try to join in the prayers and meditations of the season as they will allow you to understand, even if you do not share, the great Christian Hope of the Resurrection of the Dead.

May you come to your own glorious resurrection,

Michael

Team Rector.