

## Address to the CPTM Council by John Hibbert 19 January 2017

Good evening and thank you. I attended Bishop James' meeting at Allithwaite and the earlier Team Council with others from Cartmel & Field Broughton. I want to tell you how appalled I was by the behaviour I witnessed on both occasions and also by reading minutes of previous meetings.

Members of Field Broughton congregation have been heavily influenced, with huge potential for damage to such a small congregation; people from Cartmel have been waylaid and abused; Penny Driver told me she has been shouted at while shopping in Grange. Abusive emails have arrived with me via the Field Broughton website.

This behaviour must stop. Whatever damage people may have perceived, we are all part of the Christian community, the same church!

We have an honest desire to leave the Team, what can be the benefit of standing in our way?

Just to be clear, I want to tell you a few things from Field Broughton's point of view.

We are a small church and our well-being has been predicated on clergy leadership, I can show you statistics back to 1982 bearing that out. The critical mass for our survival is far higher proportionate to average attendance than in larger churches. Right from the start of Nick Devenish's tenure we saw his presence in our church less than half the Sundays on any rota. Representations were made to have him on the rota more often. Strong ones. They were largely ignored.

I have been on the Team Council since 2011 I think. Although we now know there is a history of tensions within the Team Council, the highest interaction with Team events came from Cartmel, providing choirs and a venue for many team services. I vividly remember the arrangements around Bishop Robert's visit one Easter when Rob from Allithwaite simply refused to engage with his visit, even though he was available every day through Holy Week. Very few Team events worthy of the name were organised in those 4 years. The Team Trail leaflet was produced, but the Team Talk publication ceased through lack of participation. In comparison with the recent enthusiasm for things ecumenical, Churches Together seemed almost moribund when judged by tangible activity, just read the Team Council minutes. For us the Team brought another layer of management and control without adequate benefit.

The idea we would sit back to allow sidelining smaller churches in favour of larger ones, almost express in the Mission Community plan, was somewhat optimistic. It's become even more clear since our Team Exit has arisen that by far the majority of clergy resource would be concentrated in the larger population centres, whatever the size of their congregations. Smaller churches (like Field Broughton) and lower populations (Cartmel) will be left high and dry.

Now, Nick Ash told me in a Team Council meeting right at the beginning that we aren't a Congregationalist church, and Andrew reiterated that at Bishop James' meeting at Allithwaite. If we small churches are planned to have so little clergy focus, and raise 'leaders' from our midst – as though we don't already have them and they all have enough time on their hands to redouble their efforts – what exactly will we be if not Congregationalist? It's all very well humans voting for Christmas, but **not** to expect Turkeys to follow suit, and unrealistic to complain when they don't.

Now there's the matter of Nick Ash and his departure. Tricky subject and very delicate. Field Broughton attended his farewell service in numbers and we were very sorry he took the step he did. However, no-one can persuade me that his decision to actually leave his clergy vocation entirely was wholly a result of recent and local disappointment with his fellow clergy, be they vicars, archdeacons or bishops. His move was deeply radical and I believe resulted from some long-considered reassessment of his place in the church.

I would like to think you can take this as a fair comment on what has happened to us. Even if you can't, I would say to you that the kind of behaviour that has been sponsored, consciously or unconsciously, within the Team since we

mooted exit has belittled us all with huge damage to our reputation. I am sorry about the decision to absent ourselves from Team meetings, but I can see it had to be done to move along what had become an intractable situation. Our absence unfortunately seems to have engendered the view that we were not people worthy of their own respect nor fellow members of your community. We still see you as our neighbours and you all know how we are commanded to treat them. Amen.