

precisely that of self-centredness (sin), how can an appeal to the same self-centredness be an answer to the problem? A better, more Biblical, motivation would be that evangelism is for the sake of the glory of God. Inviting people to adopt the world-view, beliefs and lifestyle that accords with the Gospel is a conscious expression the response that the self-giving love of the Creator seeks from the creation (see Vanstone's book, *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense*). Included in this is the making of the world a better place that you seem to accept as a valid motive for evangelism. But perhaps we need to be clear in our terminology. I do not see evangelism as being the be all and end all of mission, but simply as one element within it. Mission, or evangelisation, is surely about advancing the cause of the Kingdom of God upon earth and so includes working for justice and peace, caring for people in all their needs and working to protect the environment, as well as the proclamation of a message. Nevertheless, I cannot accept that our mission is complete unless it includes this element of evangelism. However, it is first and foremost for the sake of the Kingdom and not the church. Too many contemporary programmes and methodologies for evangelism (e.g. Church Growth, Church Planting, Purpose-Driven Church, etc.) centre on the latter rather than the former. As for your point about the church practising a morality less worthy than that of secular culture, that only goes to prove that the church needs to evangelise itself. Both religious individuals and religious institutions need to recognise that they have not yet arrived at perfection. I do not see preaching the gospel as being only to non-Christians.

Best wishes, Philip

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FRIENDS IN THE CHURCH

Julian Reindorp

Is it proper or appropriate for Christian leaders to include members of their congregation in their circle of close friends? You may have a clear view on this, but I suspect our views are affected

by a range of issues, and particularly by our experience and our temperaments. You may have been given clear advice on this when you became a minister. I inherited my father's perspective. During my formative years, he was a parish priest and once advised me: "Don't make friends in the parish." Despite that advice, however, I remember the churchwardens becoming family friends!

The area and its expectations

So much depends on whether we work alone or with a partner/spouse, the age and developmental stage of our children, the nature of the area and, by no means least, our own temperaments.

Our first five years of ministry were spent in Poplar, East London. We learned a huge amount, but it was a culture shock for us both. Our daughters were born there, including identical twins, and this certainly helped. But moving to a large new housing area for ten years, on the edge of Chatham, our children almost made friends for us. Everyone seemed at the same stage as us, and all exhausted by caring for and keeping up with small children!

I remember our local 'bobby' saying that he always saved up to go abroad for his holidays because he knew that as he walked up the steps of the plane his warrant card ran out. It is much the same for any parish priest. It is almost impossible to be off duty in the parish, and early on someone said to us, "You had the Joneses (or whoever) to supper; you have never had us." We learned the lesson and from then on, we always invited people in groups for a meal.

Who is a friend and who is a parishioner?

Our length of stay, the age of our children, and the nature of the area helped us to make friends, but who was a friend and who was a parishioner I always had difficulty in deciding. Younger clergy seem better at keeping their work and their home life separate.

Our children had their teenage years in Milton Keynes. Again we were astonishingly fortunate, as all around us were families at the same stage. For the first time we had a group of friends with whom we went on holidays. Of that group, two of the couples were part of our regular congregation.

Listening to other clergy I was aware that we had been fortunate. Without children growing up, without clergy colleagues (I have always worked in teams), without my wife finding a career outside

the life of the church, in parishes with different social backgrounds to ourselves, we would have found life infinitely harder.

Support in a time of crisis

The last twelve years have been in a highly educated, privatised, pressurized, but attractive part of outer London. When our marriage broke, the congregations could not have been more supportive, nor more encouraging when I remarried six years later. Looking back I remember my first vicar encouraging me to keep up my friendships as he felt he hadn't. Recently I have been taking his advice more seriously, and have begun meeting up with friends from school and university.

Lasting friendships have largely come from clergy colleagues, and those with whom I have been involved in the local community rather than with members of congregations. One exception has been a prayer partner, a doctor in general practice from a former parish. A constant factor has been a clergy group. At theological college we were encouraged to form 'cells'. Eight of us have met for two days every year for 34 years.

Locally, to my surprise, two key friendships have been with the leaders of a local house church.

Genetically modified by upbringing?

Reflecting on those whose Christmas cards I respond to, I realize that the church officers in our parishes have become almost natural friends. But that reflects the kind of parishes in which we have lived, where our children have flourished. I wonder how I would have coped if a considerable part of me had not been a 'parish animal' and if I had not grown up in a vicarage. The other factor that has been important is having a partner who has had a life outside the church.

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