



## SWITCHING ON THE LIGHT

A Pastoral Letter to the Teulu Asaph from the Bishop  
16<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Clare and I have just finished putting the Christmas decorations away for another year. To be honest, one of the chores before Christmas that I remember from childhood was lighting up the Christmas tree. We'd spend hours in my family putting on the decorations, and the tinsel and the lights, and then we'd switch on the lights, and ... nothing! The lights wouldn't work. You'd have to go through each bulb, screwing it afresh into the socket, and, if you were lucky, as you screwed in the last one, "Wow!" the lights would come on. If not, you'd patiently have to try changing each single bulb until you found the one that had blown. And no matter how carefully you packed them away in the new year, you'd still have the same routine when unpacking the following Christmas. Things are so much easier these days. LED Christmas lights are brighter, stronger and don't break, although press the wrong remote control button and all sorts of weird flashing patterns can be unleashed.

This year, the diocese has initiated a new focus for our common life. "Unlocking our Potential" has served us well as a motto, but as we face the future, we need to re-focus our common life afresh. So: "Growing FAITH, bringing HOPE, demonstrating LOVE" becomes our motto, and is offered as the focus for all that we undertake. The jaded among us might react by saying "Not another initiative", but in truth, this is not a call to stop everything we've been doing before, just because a shiny bright new idea has got into the diocesan leadership's collective heads. It's really intended as a reminder of why we do everything we do in the first place. Jesus himself called us to have faith in him, so let's grow that faith, and invite others to share it as well. Christians are bearers of the hope of eternal life, let's be positive and filled with hope in our engagements with others. Jesus commanded us to love one another, and to be those who serve, let's demonstrate that love with the service we take to and for the communities in which we're set.

Just like testing that string of lights to ensure that they all work, so we're invited to test our actions as disciples of Jesus, and our activities as Churches, to see whether they convey the electricity of God's grace, and help light up the world. Is our faith fed by prayer and worship? Would those attending our Churches find the nourishment to grow their faith? Does the communication of the Church send out a positive message, are we actively encouraging one another, and bringing hope in a world and society which is really quite battered by all that is going on? Is the quality of our friendships and relationships one of service and truly loving? Does the calendar of our Church activities provide evidence that our activities are centred on loving service to our communities, or just to ourselves? Are all the activities of our churches adding to the light of God's witness in our common lives?

A new year is sometimes the occasion of making New Year's Resolutions. The track record is not always distinguished by success. But perhaps as we pack away the Christmas decorations for another twelve months, we could ask in our own prayers before God, and in our Church committees, whether we, individually as disciples, and together as Churches, are now beginning the real work of Christmas, to give glory to God in the highest and to bring peace on earth to God's favoured ones (Luke 2.14), to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6.8), to grow faith, to bring hope and to demonstrate love?

