

The Reverend Dr. Jonathan Pritchard, Vicar of All Saints Anglican Church Keighley, England

I bring you greetings from your companion parish of All Saints Keighley in the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales. Your hospitality is undivided. It's lovely to be here with you: we have been made so welcome and Father Roy and Susan are such wonderful hosts.

“Love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your souls, and with all your mind (the Schema) and love your neighbor as yourself.” Always these two belonging to each other -- these two commandments lie at the heart of our faith: we learn to love our neighbor in the context of our love of God, and our love of God in the context of our love of our neighbor.

It is good to be companion parishes. It reminds us of that wider sense of being Anglican & Episcopalian. We're family - and like families we've got our differences and disagreements. On the surface Keighley and Martinsville are quite different. Virginians are very warm and generous people – whereas Yorkshire folk can be dour and direct and I've heard them described as Scotsmen who've had their generosity removed! But both Virginians and Yorkshire folk are intensely proud of where they come from.

Our churches are similar but different. We're both Anglican, have bishops and priests, and our theology is shaped by our liturgy. But The Church of England is the established church. England is divided up into territorial parishes. Everyone in England is in a parish and the parish church is their parish church. As an Anglican Vicar I am not simply responsible for the worshipping congregation who come to church week by week but also for the cure of souls for everyone in my parish regardless of whether they come to church.

It's one way to follow Jesus's command to love God and neighbor.

All Saints parish has 8,000 souls. Half identify as Muslim. Now for some, that means keeping the 5 pillars of Islam devoutly. For most it's fasting in Ramadan, celebrating the two Eids and feeling the pressures of the wider Muslim world – especially in Pakistan. But it does mean that the fault line that runs across the world between Islam and Christianity runs through my parish. I can't really do anything about the situations in Syria or Egypt or Nigeria, but I can respond to my neighbors with that love of neighbor which God prompts us to.

And there are lots of issues. The Muslim communities of Keighley mainly come from Mirpur in Pakistani Kashmir. Their culture is Eastern, South Asian and rural and they come to live in a western Urban environment. They do what all immigrant communities do: they preserve their culture, they stick together and they marry back home. That means that three quarters of Pakistani British households have one parent who probably doesn't speak English. The children may have a very different culture and outlook than their parents. Many Muslim young people feel the mosques – which are dominated by first generation greybeards in the Mosque Committees – just don't connect. There are also those Muslims who are connecting a little too much with the wider community through grooming young people for sex. Keighley has lots of problems and challenges.

The wider white British communities have issues too. It's more fragmented. The working class community feels left behind and shut out from politics. This has led to a rise in far right and racist parties like the

British National Party and the English Defense League.

But these are my neighbors and my parishioners. Like all of us, I am called to love my neighbor as I love myself. I am called to find my love of God reflected in how I love my neighbor. As the reading from Leviticus says, I am to be impartial in my love of my neighbor, I am not to take advantage of any difficulties they may have, but allow my faith to be reflected in how I engage with these issues as a good neighbor.

In the midst of these great swirling issues in Keighley stands All Saints, a warm, generous, compassionate church, liberal in outlook, catholic in its forms of worship. Its influence in the town is disproportionate to its size. But, we have been slowly declining over the past 10 years or more, as members move away or move on to a greater shore. So, now the regular congregation on a Sunday is about 30 to 35 though many are not there every week, so the congregation is really about 40 to 45. We thought about moving into the Town Centre church and closing our current building, but that is not what we believe God is calling us to do. Instead, we will be part of a re-organized town centre parish. Just like our new diocese made up of three diocese, we will have a new parish in Keighley made up of three parishes: with the civic church at its heart, supported by the large charismatic evangelical church of our neighboring parish, and us as a centre for reconciliation for the town, placing our distinctive liberal traditions in our town wide context, and picking up on issues and groups of people other churches are neglecting.

It's a big challenge. But, we cannot keep doing what we have always done because we will die as a church. So for instance, we have already brought a church-based

initiative called "Inn-Churches" to Keighley. For a week in the winter, All Saints becomes a homeless shelter, drawing together volunteers from all of the town and beyond. The Sunday where this falls becomes Homeless Sunday with hymns and songs and sermon and liturgy reflecting this theme. What takes place in the weekdays will be reflected in our worship on Sunday for we cannot separate our love of God from our love of neighbor: we need both working alongside each other. We are looking at how best to become a center for reconciliation.

We need to grow. Yes, we are developing partnerships to bring this work to fruition, not the least is a Christian Youth Worker brings together Christian and Muslim young people. But, we need to call more people to be part of the church which supports this work. We need to develop an effective evangelism that is rooted in a generous yet challenging faith.

So pray for us as we begin the next chapter of the story of All Saints. We don't have all the answers, but we have found some of the questions!

Amen