

## Matthew's weekly musing, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020

A memory floated to the surface this week. It was 1981 just after I was ordained. My first post was Beverley Minster, a church of strong choral tradition, with a large choir.

The PCC was tackling the use of inclusive language. You know, should we stop calling everyone a man, and start using words like 'people' or 'everyone'.

The issue of inclusive language had surfaced because of the new CofE liturgy which didn't begin a service with "brethren" but with "people of God". Until that time the two curates (kind of vicar-apprentices) of which I was one, and one of the four Readers, had been quietly subversive. We changed male centred language as we went along. The base section of the choir usually noticed and either winked or growled.

Why did the memory surface? Well I now realise I am changing the way I greet women. All my life it was a handshake with a man and a light hug with a woman. I now greet women with a handshake.

Another reason the memory surfaced, was a conversation in one of our villages this week. Jane had just boasted she'd been wolf-whistled when cycling through Grateley. (I am not implying anything about the men of that village!)

Our host remarked how harmless it was, and how when she was younger you just shrugged off such things including being touched. "It was how it was then". This is not far from the woman in my Beverley days who declared with great force,

*"In school and about town I am a woman, but when I am in church I am a man, and intend to remain so."*

I don't think she would have been happy with this translation of this week's gospel. I've highlighted the phrase that is important.

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## **Matthew 18**

15 "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup> But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

The Greek simply says, "if a brother offends you". The translators have found a way to make the language inclusive. Hooray.

One of my prayers is that, when we escape social distancing, we'll return towards each other as two genders with greater mutual respect. And that includes continuing to be inclusive over opportunity as well as language.

Matthew