

May/June

From the Vicar

Well, the Planning Inspector has said “No” to Citybranch. So many people in our village have worked so hard for this result. So many have made donations large and small. So many of you, “unprecedented numbers”, to quote one of the attending barristers, attended hours and hours of the Public Inquiry. This result is down to you! Your generosity, your care for the village and your commitment to a cause.

But what next? Just what will the Directors of Citybranch, Waitrose and the shaky movers at Trafford (sorry movers and shakers) do next? It's anybody's guess which way the future will go for the Square and the truth is that while the Inspector said no to these plans he did not say, and nor could he, that Citybranch can't come back with a new scheme. Once again Citybranch has complete freedom to draw up new plans and put them forward to the council to follow the due planning process. If it wants it can suggest anything, bigger, smaller, more modern, olde worlde, anything at all. After all it owns the lease and it wants to make its money. But freedom is a heavy privilege and not without its responsibilities and it is an expensive right. It has no doubt cost Citybranch a great deal of money to go through the many years of this planning proposal and then there's the council's expenses and those of the Co-op and HBRR's cost (£60,000 – well done You!).

Now that the Inspector has spoken it would be a shame to see a mildly modified scheme. After all the public concern and rejection of the plans it would be so sad to find that little had changed. After the local councilors and planning committee had so resolutely dismissed their first proposals it would be really disappointing for them to be faced with the same problem all over again. We all really want The Square to move on and be redeveloped in a more appropriate fashion and scale, but in the end all we can do is hope and wait to see what will happen next.

Freedom, free will is something that we are given but which we can so easily abuse whether it's a planning application, our treatment of others or our response to God. We are made with that ability to be free, free to think and act as we choose. It is central to our make up. When God made us he did so, so that we could have a reciprocal loving relationship with him. Just as he looked at what he had made and said “It is good.” So he wanted us to look back into his eyes and say “Oh Lord, I love you too!”

He made us so that we would be free to love him and loving him we would be free to follow him. It is our God given freedom to love and obey that means that our relationship with him is genuine and not forced. It is that honest response that creates a real relationship. But it also means that we are free to turn our backs, free to say no, free to ignore our heavenly Father's advice and comfort.

I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

"O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame. (The Book in the Bible called Daniel Chapter 9 verses 4 to 7)

Saying no to God or rejecting his word and his advice is a costly business and yet we do it, repeatedly,

because he has given us the choice and because we are often too weak or broken or daft or plain disobedient. God speaks and we stop listening. God tells us the best way to live and we say we know better. God lovingly creates a future for us and we mess it up. I bet He thinks, "Why won't you listen, why won't you do as I tell you, why do you think that your way is better than mine?"

So often all we want are our own desires, all we can feel are our own feelings, all we can hear is our own cry. We turn our backs on God again and again and again and it's rare things get any better. How many times must he repeat himself?

What happens next? Listen up, God is trying to tell us all something.

A Prayer: Dear Lord, I can't seem to hear you in the midst of all that's going on and even when I can I have to be honest and say I often pretend I can't. I'm sorry, I need to hear you and I need to change and I'm going to try. Amen

In the Love of Christ, Rev. Rob Hinton Vicar of All Saints