

How are you at holding grudges? Bitterness, is it one of the things that you're best at? Maybe it's just that the hurt or the injustice won't go away or that forgiveness feels like something that you will never be able to give.

I have to say that I really thought that that was how I was going to feel after the results of the planning committee. After all, we have lived every inch of this 3 year long planning application and we know just what will happen to us over the next well forever!

And yet I find that while I am sad, I am not despondent, while I'm sure that the wrong decision has been made I am not angry. It's a funny thing, it actually feels so much easier to forgive Citybranch and Waitrose than I ever thought it would.

The question I'm left with is, "Does that make me weak, or spineless, or fickle?" But I don't think it does. Anger and hatred and bitterness are some of those characteristics that raise their ugly heads at the merest hint of hurt or injustice. They are or have been familiar companions of all of us at one time or another – they are the easy feelings for most of us to feel or if not the easiest they are certainly often the quickest to manifest themselves and the slowest to disappear. I suppose it's a natural default, all to do with self preservation and self defence – "I might have lost BUT I WAS NOT WRONG!" "You have taken our village away BUT YOU'LL NOT TAKE OUR SPIRIT!" "You hurt me SO I'LL HURT YOU!" You might think this is over BUT I WILL NEVER FORGET OR FORGIVE!"

But the thing is that the decision has been made and now we have to move on. We are getting a massive Waitrose, 14 shops, 51 flats and a huge underground carpark and God says to me "Ok Rob you have a choice, spend the next 5 years eating yourself up with anger and bitterness or be like Jesus and be different to your natural response and find peace and show love."

"Here's another old saying that deserves a second look: 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.' Is that going to get us anywhere? Here's what I propose: 'Don't hit back at all.' If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. And

if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.

"You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. (Matthew's Gospel chapter 5 verses 38 to 44)

At the moment I feel like I can do what Jesus is asking of me in that passage from a modern version of Matthew (the first book in the New Testament) I want to extend a hand of Christian love to those who will be our new neighbours. At the Town Hall I made a point of shaking Adam Gross by the hand a wishing him well, I am committed to working with others in the community as part of the Citybranch initiated Community Liaison Group who's aim is to ease the tensions of the construction period. Jesus challenges me to love my enemy and let them bring out the best in me, not the worst. If I tried to behave in a Christ-like way during the campaign shouldn't I do the same now?

Truth is, I know that once the building work begins and the lorries start clogging Hale Rd. it won't be that easy, its going to take prayer and self control and the help of the Holy Spirit in order for me to not start ranting against what is happening and resenting what is being imposed on us, but with the help of the Holy Spirit I don't *have* to get an ulcer and I don't *have* to let God down. In another bit of the bible we read these incredible words, *"This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us"* God does not wait for us to be good, to be right, or to love him before he tells us he loves us. No, our God says "I loved you first, before you love me, simply because that's what real love is."

Isn't that one incredible thing to know and one incredible challenge to the way we hang on to our bitterness and anger and hurt. Wow!

With much love, Rev. Rob Hinton. Vicar of All Saints.