

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

21st October 2009: Rev'd John Owen, All saint's, Steep

A sense of humour

I was welcomed as vicar to the parishes of Steep and Froxfield with Privett earlier this year. At the special service, the Bishop of Portsmouth told the congregation: 'One problem has gone (i.e. the last vicar); and a new one has arrived' (i.e. me). There was startled laughter. Humour of that sort helps puncture the tone of religious solemnity and self-importance which can be found in some church services.

A few months ago, I attended an event at which Desmond Tutu was speaking. The same note of mischievous humour was on display as I had found at my welcome service in Steep. The topic was deadly serious – the former Archbishop was talking about gun crime – but his infectious sense of fun was in evidence.

Jesus had a sense of humour, though it gets overlooked. He had to cope with a bunch of disciples who had big egos. They squabbled over which of them was to be the greatest in God's kingdom. I imagine he had a wry smile on his face when he complained at the people who saw the speck of sawdust in their neighbour's eye but paid no attention to the plank in their own. And I'm sure he wondered what he'd done to deserve a family like his own when they turned up to take him home when he was preaching. They thought he was mad.

I like to think that God looks at us with kindly amusement, so that we don't take ourselves too seriously, in order that we can give him our full attention.