

14th January 2025

Endings

**“He who has put a good finish to his undertaking
is said to have placed a golden crown to the whole.”**

Eustathius, *Commentary on the Iliad*

In October last year, I reflected on new beginnings, prompted by the Union of the two congregations in our village. But I was taken back to the success of that new beginning in a recent conversation with a friend who was struggling with an ending. He had been charged with looking after a small church, which, with the restructuring of Church structures round about, was having to close. “Can we really celebrate an ending?” he asked.

Endings, of course, can be exciting, like the publishing of a book, the building of a house, or the solving of a crime. But they can also be devastating – like the closing of a village church. We may say an ending is the beginning of something else, so we can look forward with hope and a positive attitude. But in bidding farewell to what has gone, it can be hard to see celebration in that. So, how do we make an ending “a good finish”?

The first step in celebrating endings is reflecting on our achievements, what’s been accomplished. From these reflections, surely we can find something helpful – even inspirational – which we can carry with us into the future. And remember, too, that we’re not alone. There will be others who’re also affected by the ending. So why not share stories, both corporate and personal memories. Create a history. Make sure the past is marked and remembered. Take time to reflect together.

Then, we can “connect the dots”. We’re not suddenly cut off from what’s gone before. There are features which link the past to the future, not in the sense of, “We used to do it differently back then,” but more, “What we did then might give us clues about what we might do now.”

And finally, it’s useful to create a significant event, a marker-post, whatever that is, that stands between the past and the future – a ritual, some words, the “doing” of something symbolic, a gathering, can all help.

The French writer, Jean de la Fontaine wrote in *Fables*:

We ought to consider the end in everything.

But can we, and do we? And if “we ought to”, how do we do it well?

A prayer for today

Lord, help me to see a beginning in this ending, and to celebrate both. Amen

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