



## ***Pastor's Page***

### **“Anger Management”**

The toddler group was going well as I received a text message on my mobile phone reminding me that the group was going on a trip to the nature centre next Wednesday. (The text was from a friend not from Orange!) As I contemplated this fact I decided I'd nip home to get some leaflets outlining the summer activities for the group. As I began to drive my car out of the church car park I saw a needy man whom I know talking to two smartly dressed elderly ladies. The deprived man accosted me and began one of his long tales. I'd already talked to him that morning reminding him that it was inappropriate for him to be on the premises when we were running a toddler group, so I was frustrated to see him still loitering around the grounds. At this point one of the ladies asked me if I knew where St Stephen's church was. I began to explain how to get there as “Mr X” continued harassing me. Having managed to give some reasonable instructions to the ladies I got back into my car ready to shoot off quickly to my house. At this point “Mr X”, who was still harassing me, put his large bag of stuff on my bonnet and stood in front of my car. I snapped! Leaping out of the vehicle I shouted “take those things off my bonnet immediately and get out of my way!” He did, as did the two elderly ladies whose expressions said “I hope the minister at the Anglican Church is a bit nicer!!” As I drove away I was quite shocked at how angry I had been with this man and was doubly determined when I saw him next to be more civilised. (I soon got the opportunity as he was still there when I returned!)

For me, anger is an emotion that I don't experience too often – frustration yes, but not anger – however I was angry that morning. And I was angry because my little plan to get the leaflets in time to the people at the toddler group was being thwarted. Now, although anger isn't of itself a sin, most of our anger is sinful because it comes from a selfish rather than righteous motive, as mine did on that Wednesday morning. I only wish that I could get angry about the same things that God gets angry about. I suspect that God gets more angry with the way that life often treats Mr X that with the factors that conspired to nearly cause me to miss giving out some leaflets! Jesus never seemed to get angry because his day was being messed up! His anger seemed always to be on behalf of others. For example when on one occasion the Pharisees watched him like a hawk in the synagogue to see if he would heal a man on the Sabbath day Mark tells us he got angry. He instructed the man with a shrivelled hand to stand up (Jesus wanted to make the healing a very public act) and then said to the Pharisees; “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” The Gospel writer then says that Jesus, before healing the man, “looked round at them in anger and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts” (Mark 3:1-6) He was angry that people had so perverted God's law that they were more concerned with keeping rules than saving life. And more famously when Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple and drove out those who were buying and selling, he was angry at the misuse of God's house – which included exploiting the poor. (Matthew 21:12-17)

When did you or I last get angry about the things that anger God? - sin and its devastating effects - the exploitation of the weak and the vulnerable? When did we last get angry on behalf of others? Perhaps its time to pray for some righteous anger, which might be a dangerous thing to do - but so is standing in front of my car!!!

*3<sup>d</sup> August 2008*