

## **Election Address – Richard Dove**

During lockdown we decided, when permitted, to open our church every Wednesday morning for two hours for anyone who wanted to sit quietly in a sacred space. Many people took up the opportunity. Many were rarely, if ever, seen at our services. Many told me about their searing grief and disrupted lives, others just wanted solace away from everyday noise. St James the Great, East Malling was, for them, a beacon of both hope and comfort.

The Church of England has a central role to play in the lives of many, even if many do not yet know it. We have to communicate in fresh, compelling ways to show both relevance and guidance. We have to show inclusion and empathy over equal marriage, LGBTQ+ rights, climate change and immigration. We must lead on these issues to get more to follow. Obfuscation often only demonstrates out of touch attitudes and fossilised thinking. We must both disrupt how things are done whilst respecting our fundamental values and traditions.

I have worked as a print and television journalist and filmmaker for over forty years. Communicating complex, nuanced messages has been a regular task, particularly for an international audience.

I was a programme producer and editor at the BBC and was part of the founding team of Al Jazeera English where we set out to be the voice of the voiceless. We aimed to tell stories both known and unknown in a truthful and compelling way to engage viewers around the world.

The Church of England must continue to tell a compelling story of faith, hope and kindness in a world where such qualities are often in short supply. It must show that overriding its own difficulties and out of date attitudes is both a necessity and a strength.

The world needs faith and leadership almost like never before.

As one lady told me on a Wednesday morning: “This place helps me in ways I never thought possible.”

I have been a member of the congregation at St James the Great for over thirty years and am now its Church Warden. I have travelled across the world making current affairs documentaries. Getting messaging and communication right is an essential skill and I would hope I can help in some small way to get our messages of faith and hope to the many who need it and the many who think they don't.