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Dear friend,

With the Prime Minister reshuffling his cabinet this week and the diocese reshuffling its churches into Ministry Areas, it's probably timely that the lectionary gives us James 3.13-18 as one of our readings this week.

James appears to be addressing an issue that has arisen amongst the Christians he is writing to. It seems some people are making a lot of noise about how wise and understanding they are, but James knows them to be motivated by selfish ambition. He is surprisingly scathing about this, not only saying that "such wisdom does not come down from heaven", but going on to describe it as earthly, unspiritual and "of the devil".

In every walk of life, we find people who are motivated by their own interests and people who are motivated by the needs of others.

There really are people who go into politics to make a positive difference to other people's lives. Along the way, some of them are overtaken by greed or self-interest, but there are shining examples of politicians who have retained their desire to change things for the better for others.

We might like to imagine that there is no place for selfish ambition in the church but sadly that isn't the case. Both at local level and at Diocesan and Provincial level we have probably all encountered people whose involvement on committees and councils is driven by their own interests, whether it be the "selfish ambition" James rails against or a simple desire to keep things how they want them to be.

I'll leave it to the political commentators to speculate on the motivations of Boris' new colleagues around the cabinet table, but all of us who are engaged in the life of the church should weigh James's words carefully and check our own motivations for the things that we do. How much of it is about what we want and how much is really based on helping the church to meet the needs of the people around us?

James tells us that those who are wise should show their wisdom "by their good life" and by "deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom". As we work towards the formation of the Ministry Area that will shape and support the work of our churches in the years to come, we should all pray that this is the type of wisdom we will see in our Ministry Area Council and its associated bodies, because that's what the church really needs.

With my best wishes,

Steve

(Rev'd Steve Willson, Interim Associate Priest)