

Recently I read about a man who hacked into Facebook and gathered information to which he was not entitled. The defence was that he was an “ethical” hacker. I suppose the judge that sent him down for eight months had to decide between maintaining the rule of law and whether or not this man’s ingenious, well planned actions were well-meant. (Personally, I would like to see all hackers locked up with a book - in fact, the Good Book - until such time as they had learnt from it.)

Ethics, the moral principles that govern a person’s or group’s behaviour, can be subjective; sometimes the rule of the land can be in conflict with them, slavery in 18th century England, for example. Lent, running throughout March this year, is a time when we who count ourselves part of the Church focus more carefully about our ethics.

Hopefully, although it isn’t as easy a subject as it sounds, last year’s point, “less jelly, more Jesus,” puts us into a mind of self discipline with which we can see beyond our personal advantage. To help this process, we are having a number of weekly sessions about ethics. These will be conceived and led by members of the laity (that is, some of you, not me!), from whence the idea came. Keep an eye on notices for details, especially on our website: www.burnhamsbenefice.org.uk - assuming no-one has hacked into it, of course!

In the mean time, here’s a little ethical situation for you to ponder. A man is guilty of inciting religious hatred, subversion, economic destabilising, criminal damage, civic unrest, withholding information from an investigating officer of the law, breaking numerous by-laws and escaping after being sent down. How could this possibly be right? What circumstances would ever justify this? (You might even know who it is...)