*Transcript to video https://youtu.be/POD3j5DZoBA*

**Wider contacts**

One of the strange things about me is that I actually have a favourite motorway. My favourite motorway is the M6 Toll Road. It’s worth every penny of the fee, just for the sheer joy of driving on a motorway with no other traffic.

Well, one day I was on that motorway when I decided to stop at the motorway services. And when I went in it seemed rather busy, so at the cafe I said to the young woman serving me that it seemed rather busy. And she did that thing that people do when they’re proud of what they’re about to say. She kind of squared her shoulders a bit and looked me in the eye and said: “Well, this is the busiest Costa in the world.” I smiled politely and thought to myself: “This seems very unlikely.” Quietest motorway in the country, busiest cafe seems a bit odd. But a few weeks later a colleague checked the facts and it turns out that by volume of sales that is indeed the busiest in the world.

It might seem a bit of a random story there. But what it reminds us of is the significance of passing contact. Whether people are going for the first time in their life or whether it’s part of their everyday experience, everyone counts.

In the Church of England, in a culture where people have fewer and fewer contacts with church, we have an amazing opportunity to meet people through weddings, through funerals, through christenings, when they come to us at a very special time in their lives. And they bring with them their family and their friends. And often the congregations at those events are something around 80 or 100 people, sometimes more. And when we add that up that becomes 50 million people or more during the year that the Church of England meets simply through those events.

And the amazing thing is, particularly at weddings and christenings, that a large number of those people are actually under 40. And in that season of their life many of them are going not just once, but to several different events, weddings, christenings, not just in church but other venues as well.

So it’s really important that when they come to us they’re building up a bank of positive memories and good experiences, because we don’t know where those positive memories will lead them. We don’t know if we’ll lead them on to a beginning of a journey of faith or just lead them with a good feeling. But what we do know from our research is that when people have a negative experience of church it closes everything down.

So, as one friend of mine said, a friend who has one of those very pretty villages where she does a lot of weddings, she said: “I don’t know when they’re there in the congregation at a wedding whether they’re there for the first time in their life, possibly the only time in their life, so I need them to have the best possible experience that they can.”