*Transcript to video https://youtu.be/5MVMBKZLmOM*

**The balance of ‘warmth’ and ‘process’**

I was caught by surprise one day when I went to a seminar for funeral celebrants. I was incognito, not wearing a dog collar, so no one realised there was a vicar present.

Anyway, the seminar was about public speaking and the person leading the seminar has a premise where she talks about how we use ‘dog mode’ and ‘cat mode’, and it’s not as if one is right and one is wrong, but it’s how we use them together that really makes a difference.

So we’re talking about being in dog mode - think front foot, think labrador puppy, think ‘I’m coming towards you and asking you to play with me, to be with me’. When she described cat mode she described someone who was in a space that’s very formal and ‘in my own time, if I want to, when I’m ready, I might invite you to join me’. And she ended that description of cat mode by saying “like vicars”. And that’s the problem.

People perceive vicars as being always in that slightly remote, slightly formal place. And yet, when we go towards people with smiles and warmth and engagement we open up the possibility of building a relationship. Recently our researchers have been talking to us about the importance of meeting people at life’s big moments with warmth and smiles.

You see, see when people come to us at one of life’s big moments they’ve got big feelings, big thoughts and big questions. So we think about it as being on an axis. On the one hand there is emotional warmth. On the other there is process and information and our goal is to meet people and get them into this box over here, as it were. If we only meet them with emotional warmth then they have a nice time, but actually the possibility of the event being well-run diminishes. But if we only meet them with processes and information, then the possibility of relationship is diminished. From the moment someone looks at a website or looks at a church notice board or calls in to ask about a wedding, the potential for relationship has begun. We have that moment to greet them with words such as “I’m sorry to hear your news” or “congratulations on the arrival of a child” and show with warmth and engagement that we’re interested in them and interested in where that relationship will take us.

And the thing is, couples, families, when they come to us, they’re extremely anxious. Our research has shown that they’re worried that we’re going to judge them, that we’re going to find them falling short of what’s required and, in particular, they’re worried because they see us as having the potential to make or break their big day.

So it’s so important that we begin to build a relationship with that sense of welcome and warmth and that that continues on into the future, not just with the clergy person who meets them, not just with the church administrator, but when they come through the doors of the church the whole people of God meet them with that same sense of warmth and welcome. You see, if the heart of our faith is about relationship, a relationship with God, then we have that opportunity when we meet people to model that loving relationship in the way we show warmth and welcome.