

Dear friends,

I must say that when I saw all the children troop into church accompanied by a host of helpers and parents who had chosen to stay and help, I came over quite emotional. Our first “Funfaith” session had been a huge success. For the first time in a long, long time I was able to put a number in the “under 16” box in the service register for a Sunday service – 17 to be exact. You never know if something is going to work or not, but the comments and attitude of the parents made it clear that this was a worthwhile and necessary development. Attendance was good overall with easily over 100 adults for the morning attendance bolstered by 50 at choral evensong at 6pm. I know it’s not all about bums on seats, but it doesn’t half make you feel good!

The next “Funfaith” is on the 12th February and I must emphasise that this is an initiative covering the entire RMC so is open to anyone in any part of the mission community for children from age 4 to 11.

In between the morning services and evensong Louise and I went for a very muddy, squelchy walk and on the hill overlooking East Budleigh there was this beautiful full rainbow.



It looks like the end of the rainbow ends just near St. Michael’s church in Otterton!

22nd January – Epiphany 3

Canon Mike Williams is presiding at both services in St Peter's and I will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11am respectively.

Isaiah 9: 1-4. In 9:6 Isaiah writes the famous prophecy “unto us a child is born”. This piece is about that prophecy and is included today because Matthew quotes it in his gospel. The way of the sea is the part of Northern Israel that was conquered by the Assyrians and is better known as Galilee. Prophesying that with God's help victory will belong to God's people Isaiah references the “day of Midian” when Gideon defeated a much larger foe with just 300 men because they followed God's instructions.

1 Corinthians 1: 10-18. Paul rails against the divisions and factionalism in the Corinthian church, urging a common approach because they share a common faith. Smooth arguments and human wisdom are uneasy bedfellows with the wisdom of God that reveals himself in a man dying on a cross, but this is what unites us as Christians.

Matthew 4: 12-23. Matthew locates Jesus in Capernaum that corresponds to the prophecy of the Messiah as being in “The way of the sea”. Jesus preaches “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near” and his ministry starts to unfold with the calling of his first disciples, the people that would form his support structure over the next three years of his ministry and the people that would propagate the gospel after his death and resurrection.

Thought for the day

I am learning Spanish at the moment and to sound like a native you really need to be able to trill your “r”s. “rr” is an even heavier trill but if you have never had to do it then it isn't easy. The epiphany for me came when a Spanish teacher said that Spanish children aren't born being able to do it either – they must learn. It is easier to absorb ideas, languages, and concepts when you are young. What you learn when young stays with you well into adulthood, so the retreat from church going, and particularly taking children to church, has a wide ranging and long-lasting effect.

It is common to say that after the rebellious teenage phase, when it is natural to question everything and defy convention and your parents, that people will eventually come back to faith. But what if you don't have anything to

come back to? Unless you have been exposed to a certain amount of Christian education either in church, school or at home, then the faith will obviously wither on the vine. Which is why “open the book” and “Funfaith” are so important because they either introduce completely or reinforce what they have previously been exposed to in school or home and make the connection between a faith learned about from a book or teacher with a living faith community that embraces these beliefs. I still can’t trill my R’s – if only I’d learned to do it when I was young!

The prayer for today is by a 3rd century theologian called Origen.

**Lord, put your hand on our eyes,
That we shall be able to see not only the visible
But also that which is invisible.
Let our eyes be focused
Not only on that which is present
But also on those things that are yet to come.
Unveil our heart’s visions,
That in spirit we may gaze on your glory.
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin