

Dear friends,

My first Thanksgiving meal in England (My daughter tells me I attended one in Romania given by American friends, but I have no recollection of it) happened in Otterton on the 24th November given by good friends Ken and Belinda. Ken is from California and Thanksgiving reminds him of home obviously but all twelve of us thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and the sumptuous spread. Of course, with the superb Candlelight dinner in the Peter Hall on Saturday night and the Christmas Solos lunch on Sunday it means that we have enjoyed three big Turkey dinners in four days and my waistline is feeling the strain!

Last Sunday was an uplifting day. Both Advent Sunday services in East Budleigh and Otterton went very well, the aforementioned Solos lunch was lovely and then we had the “Advent Carol service” at St Peter’s in the evening which was glorious. All followed by Pasta and red wine, the “Strictly” results followed by the football on iplayer. I also won two games of scrabble – does life get any better than this?

At the Solos lunch we said au revoir to Joy Boyles, a fixture on the social side of St. Peter’s for 37 years and a lovely person. She is going to accommodation nearer to her family in Winchester and we pray for her and thank her for her contribution to the life of St. Peter’s over her time here.



A light shining in the darkness

December 4th – Advent 2

I am presiding at both morning services at St. Peter's and Chris Cant will preside at All Saints and John Archibald at Otterton at 9.30 and 11.00 respectively. Our Advent candle this week commemorates the prophets and the colour of the candle is purple.

Isaiah 11: 1-10. Jesse was King David's father so was the root of the Davidic line of kings that the Jews lionized in their folklore and imagination. In fact the kings often proved lacklustre and here Isaiah look into the far future of a perfect King of the Jews that was so close to God that he was like the hands and voice of God on earth. While the Jews would interpret that in terms of a literal king of Israel Christians see Jesus Christ in that description.

Romans 15: 4-13. Paul basically affirms the point that Jesus is the fulfilment of all scriptural prophesy but not just for the Jews. He lays great emphasis in the fact that the scriptures also prophesy a widening out of the scope of the message to basically include all people and nations on earth.

Matthew 3: 1-12. The theme of this week is the prophetic tradition and Matthew makes a specific reference to one of them from Isaiah referring to a man who would prepare the way for Jesus. Matthew proclaims this man to be John the Baptist. It was important to the early church to see John is that same prophetic tradition and thus acting as a bridge between the old testament world of patriarchs and prophets to usher in and proclaim the new revelation that was about to be revealed to the world.

What does our Logo mean?

At the top of this email is the symbol of the Raleigh Mission Community, but where did it come from and what does it mean? It was designed by Hanneke Coates, a member of the All Saints congregation for when the three churches of the RMC initially joined together about 30 years ago as a symbol of unity. The little scallop shell in the top of the symbol of course is a reference to the little poem written by our most famous local person born and bred at Hayes Barton in 1552, Sir Walter Raleigh .

It was written between his sentencing and execution.

His pilgrimage:

Give me my scallop -shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation.

We are of course all surrounded by the gently sloping hills of Devon as seen on our symbol.

The stream/ river flows through all 3 Parishes - even the small stream "the Grimble" flows through Yettington and then into the "brook" of East Budleigh eventually into the river Otter before it flows into the sea.

It also represents the water/ river of life in our faith's journey. The Budleigh pebbles represent the people of our Parishes, Some lie close to the cross, others further away, but we are all on our journey of faith

Christmas Services across the RMC

Family Carol Services at:

St Peter's Church Budleigh Salterton on 18th December at 18.00

St Michael's Otterton on 18th December at 16.00

All Saints' East Budleigh on 24th December at 18.00

Christingle Services at:

All Saints' East Budleigh on 18th December at 15.00

St Michael's Otterton on 24th December at 15.00

St Peter's Budleigh Salterton on 24th December at 17.00

Christmas Day Holy Communion Services:

Midnight Mass commencing 23.00 on 24th December at St Peter's Budleigh Salterton

St Peter's Budleigh Salterton at 8.00 & 10.00

All Saints' East Budleigh at 9.30

St Michael's Otterton at 11.00

Thought for the day

I had to laugh that on Sunday morning radio it was announced that apparently the C of E have said that churches should consider changing their carol service times if they were being held on the 18th December because that was also the date of the world cup final.

As if it were that easy, even if we had a mind to do something like that. Given the personnel and logistical challenges presented by having three separate churches with their own traditions. With any day or time change you automatically lose a sizeable chunk of the congregation. Personnel might not be available at the changed day and time. More to the point (and I speak as someone who loves football) it just seems wrong to change something like that because of a football match.

I suppose that marks me out as being old fashioned. But I'm quite happy being old fashioned – in fact I think it is time for me to embrace and own the fact in a world that I increasingly don't recognise. All the music and films I like, and the attitudes and cultural references I have come from a time that (now I think about it) is about 40 years old or older. It is not that I think modern stuff is routinely worse than from any other era – it is just that it is not the era that formed me or I'm familiar with. I think I've turned into my dad who used to screw up his face and declare anything I was listening to as rubbish. I hear you Dad and I now know where you were coming from.

Notwithstanding all of that, how blessed am I that I am part of a Christian Tradition (Large T) that transcends all changes in culture and transcends all denominational traditions (small t). A Tradition that might struggle to make itself heard sometimes, but a Tradition that can cut through and unite people of different ages, social backgrounds, races and cultures with the same message for every one of us.

I love you. I forgive you. Abide in me and I'll abide in you.

The Prayer for Today is an Advent prayer by Michael Perham.

May God the Father

Who love the world so much that he gave his only son,

Give you Grace to prepare for eternal life.

May God the Son,

Who comes to us as redeemer and judge,

Reveal to you the path from darkness to light.

May God the Holy Spirit,

By whose working the virgin Mary conceived the Christ

Help you bear the fruits of holiness

Love and peace,
Martin