

Dear friends,

Listening to the choir sing the anthem “The three kings” featuring the young chorister Oscar was a truly spiritual experience at Choral Evensong on Sunday evening.

I continue to be amazed and very proud that we have a choir that I feel could easily pass as a professional outfit right here in our church. It has grown in numbers, age demographic, and competence since Stephen Tanner took over the reigns and all accomplished against the backdrop of the Pandemic. We should all be very proud.

On the 12th February

We have an RMC awayday planned at All Saints church Sidmouth. I have booked the use of the church from 10am to 4pm and I am now looking for people to help with refreshments – teas coffees that sort of thing. I envisage people taking a packed lunch. This will be a quiet day to rest away from our home churches, engage in some spiritual practices, and wait on God to reveal himself to us. It is open to all people in any of our churches to engage and immerse themselves in the stream of His Spirit. “Unless the Lord builds the house they labour in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1)

Sunday 16th January – Epiphany 2

I will be presiding at both services at St. Peter’s and Reverend Colin Randall will be presiding at the 9,30am at All Saints and the 11am service at St. Michael’s.

Isaiah 62: 1-5. It isn’t clear whether this is addressed to people still in exile or to people who have returned to Jerusalem and living amidst ruins and poverty but the poetic language of promise is vivid. It uses the language of a woman being abandoned and replaces it with that woman (Jerusalem) being married and secure with God as her husband. The marriage of earth and heaven.

1 Corinthians 12: 1-11. A text that proclaims loud and clear that the church operates as a whole and that gifts, services and activities are distributed amongst the faithful so that we all need each other to thrive and grow. The source is the same of course – God’s spirit coursing through us and amplifying our natural attributes.

John 2: 1-11. “The gospel in miniature” is how the sign of turning water into wine has been described. The water of our lives is turned into rich intoxicating wine when we accept God’s Spirit into our lives. There are only ever “signs” in John’s gospel – he never uses the word Miracle – and this is the first and keynote sign that all the other signs in John’s gospel refer back to. So understanding this sign is the key to understanding the entire Christ event and understanding our own life.

Wednesday 9th February at 7pm

We are hosting at St. Peter’s an event that aims to increase the interaction between science and the church on behalf of Exeter University. My wife, Louise as both a scientist and Christian will be one of the speakers. It should be interesting and engaging and we will be inviting other churches from around the area to attend. It is an opportunity to find out how you can get more involved with science in our area. Your views on how science should be designed and carried out are always welcome!

Thought for the day

Seeing and understanding more clearly is the theme of the season of Epiphany yet it still comes as a surprise when you do begin to see things more clearly.

Whether we buy into the saying that “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks” or not, we do get set in our ways of thinking and believe that what we thought we knew and believed would always be at that same level. A dawning realisation or increased clarity and insight don’t come easily or necessarily through any hard work of our own, though it pays to be attentive.

God works and communicates through “matter”, people, situations, life events, sometimes successes but more often through failures. The interconnected nature of all things means that whether you intend to or not, God can use you to say something to someone else that is instrumental in changing their outlook and understanding of things or how they feel about things and about themselves.

In that way we are all potential “angels” – the word means a messenger – delivering something of God to another. Not consciously perhaps but a messenger, nonetheless. And I don’t mean through something like a sermon (though I hope that is so) but through our normal interactions with people on a daily basis. So, while that of course could be a word of Judgement in some

circumstances our default setting should be to build up and not break down, to encourage and try to engage and enthuse people. In other words, try and be a blessing to other people and not a curse. If you want to change the atmosphere in a room make it for the better and not for the worse. We know we are all on an eternal path together so we have to get along for an awfully long time!

The Prayer for the Day was written by Janet Schaffran and Pat Kozak

**We give you thanks
O gentle one who has touched our soul.
You have loved us from the moment of our first waking
And have held us in joy and grief,
Stay with us, we pray.
Grace us with your presence
And with it, the fullness of our own humanity.
Help us claim our strength and need,
Our awesomeness and fragile beauty,
That encouraged by the truth
We might work to restore
Compassion to the human family
And renew the face of the earth.**

Love and peace,

Martin