

Dear friends,

Well would you believe it! After two and a half years of dodging Covid, when everything on that front is in the rear-view mirror, Louise and I both succumb, scuppering our scarecrow festival weekend and cancelling our family holiday.

**Thank you** to Trevor, Margaret and John who stepped into the breach at the last minute and covered all the services. We are self-isolating at the moment, but I am still contactable and will produce this email (as you can see) as normal this week. Presumably I'll be testing negative by the weekend so Sunday services should go ahead as normal, and I am still due to attend the Diocesan conference in Cirencester next week so there will be no soul food next Wednesday.

**The scarecrow festival** in East Budleigh – which was raising funds for our tower and clock face this year – was a tremendous success. Although we couldn't take part as planned, there were loads of visitors to the vicarage garden to view the classic cars and I hear everything went splendidly everywhere else. We waited until everyone had gone to deliver the "Thankyou letters" to people who had participated by putting up a scarecrow and we delivered over 100 letters which is a measure of the wonderful village involvement in this great weekend. Well done to the "Friends of All Saints" committee and everyone who helped in any kind of way. Around £4,800 was raised - a massive achievement!



Noah's ark actually washed up in East Budleigh, contradicting all the Biblical scholars. Jane Buckland-wright's construction took pride of place in our garden.



Meanwhile my (less well constructed) sozzled vicar was relegated to the entrance.

## Sunday 19th June – Trinity 1 (Proper 7)

This Sunday (covid permitting) I will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's and the venerable Trevor Jones will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's.

**Isaiah 65: 1-9.** The message here is that God reveals himself and is ready to be found by those who are looking and want to find him but is also routinely ignored and sidestepped by people he loves and wants to care for. Proving that nothing much has changed from the time that was written up to the present day.

**Galatians 3: 23-29.** The difference between the old covenant between the Jews and God and the new covenant (agreement) revealed in Jesus Christ is that we no longer have to earn God's love through observing certain laws but enter into it by faith in God's grace.

**Luke 8: 26-39.** A tormented soul is brought to his right mind through an encounter with Jesus who banishes all the things/spirits/doubts/demons that were pulling him apart. Those demons are a metaphor for our own doubts/fears /anxieties/ pride – in fact anything that separates us from God -that can be banished when we encounter God in Christ.

## Thought for Today

Buddhists say that the biggest source of mental suffering has its root in not accepting the present reality and always wishing things were different from how they actually are. This sentiment has its corollary in Christianity expressed if you remember, in the serenity prayer about knowing what can be and can't be changed and having the wisdom to know the difference. So, accepting that my family holiday is cancelled, accepting that I have to self-isolate for other's wellbeing, accepting that a refund from the holiday company might be impossible, accepting that we have a fridge and freezer full of food that we'll have to work through ourselves – comes a strange peace of mind.

We have little to no control over what happens to us. We only have some measure of control over how we react to things. Rage and anger are valuable emotions when the object of these emotions are things like injustice, inhumanity, or cruelty, but even then, they have to be wisely channelled to harness and use them effectively – not easy when you are angry!

Human beings are complex and a mass of contradictions but finding a still centre, against which all other things can be placed really helps you to find a sense of perspective and the space and time to react accordingly – and our still centre is where we place our God.

**The prayer for today** is again (no surprise) that prayer that does bear much repeating and has become known as the serenity prayer written by American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr.

**God, give us grace to accept with serenity  
the things that cannot be changed,  
Courage to change the things  
which should be changed,  
and the Wisdom to distinguish  
the one from the other.**

**Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time,  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
This sinful world as it is,  
Not as I would have it,  
Trusting that You will make all things right,  
If I surrender to Your will,  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,  
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.**

**Amen.**

Love and peace,  
Martin