

Dear friends,

Thank you to everyone involved in the “seat at the table” event, the away day on Saturday and at all the morning services on Sunday. After a frenetic few days I needed some refreshment and it came with a superb choral evensong in the evening. The youngster, Lizzy, has the voice of an angel whose solo contribution augmented the fulsome sound of our wonderful choir and helped me re-align myself.

At our away day we experienced many different tools to enable us to enter consciously into God’s presence and I sincerely hope that some of them may prove useful in developing a personal spiritual practice. We had two sessions I called “answers on a postcard”. The first trying to discern where we are and the second trying to discern where God may be leading us. It will take a little while to absorb and pray through the results of these exercises, but I’ll let you know when I’ve come to any conclusions.

I’m on holiday next week walking on Dartmoor so there will be no email. Pray for fine weather for us!

Lent course.

On the 2nd March (Ash Wednesday) we engage with our Diocesan Lent course called “surprised by generosity” at 7pm in the Peter Hall. This is a seven-week course and sign-up sheets will be available in all three churches from next Sunday.

Sunday 20th February – 2nd before Lent

Canon Mike Williams returns to St. Peter’s after a few years at the cathedral when he presides at both morning services (8am and 10am) at St. Peter’s and I will be presiding at both services at All Saints and St. Michael’s at the normal times of 9.30 and 11am respectively.

Genesis 2: 4-9, 15-25. A careful reading of the Adam and Eve story Reveals the mutuality and complementarity of the sexes – a harmony that is shattered in chapter 3. It also recounts the situation where people naturally cease to be dependent on their parents and form new relationships with all their attendant responsibilities. Their nakedness indicates a very different more pure and unsullied time before their fall from Grace.

Revelation 4. The majesty of God, to whom all worship is addressed, is described by John in his ecstatic vision of the “I AM” the “one who is”. Lots of fantastic and strange imagery ensues. The imagery of the four living creatures comes from Ezekiel and may suggest the four winds of heaven and the four corners of the earth. Irenaeus, an early church father, drew on this allusion to symbolise the four evangelists and to argue for four gospels in the New Testament to reflect the divine ordering of creation.

Luke 8: 22-25. Jesus calms the storm and indicates his personal authority over the elements, an authority that is proper to God. Jesus is to be known by his disciples as their saviour and deliverer no matter what the circumstances. Nothing can resist his word of command.

Birthday party

Saturday 26th February at the Vicarage in East Budleigh from 6pm – 10pm. to celebrate my 60th and Louise’s ****. No food – just nibbles and bring a bottle of your favourite tippie although we’ll have a few to get going.

Thought for the Day

“For God alone my soul in silence waits, from him comes my salvation”
(psalm 127:1)

“Your call is very important to us” intones the voice of doom. After a forty-minute wait and via several pressings of myriad options you suddenly lose the connection (and the will to live) without ever speaking to a live human being and your thoughts turn to murder while you turn the air blue. Some of us just don’t feel in tune with so much of the modern world anymore and every technological advance feels like a retreat from real contact with real people. In this sense the church is decidedly counter cultural, face to face, personal and sociable.

People coming together for a common purpose with no technological barrier between us. Decidedly low-tech common rituals, communal singing, eating together in a communal meal, and praying together. Church life is real engagement with other people that engages all the senses.

There is also a powerful feel to communal silence as well. I know silence frightens some people which is probably why we feel the need to fill every waking second of our life with noise and activity.

But silence is a gift, and it has always been the contention of mystics from all religious traditions that God can be perceived and related to in the silence of our hearts and souls – the depths of our being. I like to punctuate services from time to time with periods of intentional silence and to take services at a measured pace.

Life has become so fast paced and impersonal we are fulfilling a great social need I think in consciously slowing down and cultivating a more human and measured way of doing things including the good use of silence to think about and cogitate but chiefly to simply rest in God and allow Him to pray in us.

The Prayer for Today will be familiar to you because the C of E starts every Eucharist with it every Sunday and we know it as the collect for purity or the prayer of preparation. It entered the Anglican rite via Thomas Cranmer in 1549 but is much older actually starting life as a 6th century prayer from a liturgical book called the Gregorian sacramentary (A sacramentary is a priest's mass book)

**Almighty God,
Unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known
And from whom no secrets are hidden
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit
That we may perfectly love thee,
And worthily magnify thy Holy name,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen**

Love and peace,
Martin