

Dear friends,

The first lunchtime concert at St. Peter's church got underway on Friday lunchtime and provided a lovely spot in the day which was also the ninth anniversary of Louise and I first meeting each other. Our recollections of that first date differs of course. I am sure we had a meal, but Louise is equally sure we didn't. As Maurice Chevalier once crooned – Are yes, I remember it well!

In the middle of APCM season, it transpires we have had to change the rotas to make sure I am in the right place at the right time because the schedules didn't match but we managed to arrange things so that I was at All Saints on Sunday and can be at St. Peter's this Sunday coming. This means of course that All Saints and St. Michael's will have the pleasure of having Reverend Mike Williams for the first time since he was licenced to the RMC.

Sunday 22nd May – Easter 6

I will be presiding at St. Peter's for both the 8am and 10am services and Rev. Mike Williams will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's. In the evening we have of course the Sylvia Pritchard memorial concert at 6.30 in St. Peter's to celebrate our former director of music.

Acts 16: 9-15. The move to Europe from Asia to proclaim the gospel is very important historically of course, and it is typical of Luke and the prominence he gives to women that the first convert is a woman. She is from Thyatira in Lydia, so she probably was *from* Lydia rather than called Lydia. She was a "God-fearer", a gentile attracted to the morals and outlook of the Jews, but unable to become Jewish of course and these people were the important first converts to Christianity, which welcomes all comers.

Revelation 21:10, 21:22 – 22:5. The new Jerusalem is a vision of the fusion of heaven and earth. There is no Temple needed because God and the lamb are everywhere present. No sacrifices are required in the presence of the slain lamb. The Spirit of God flows like a river down the streets and the church here is as it will be, without spot or blemish unlike the seven churches of Asia that bear the brunt of John's criticism in the first part of the book of Revelation.

John 14: 23-29. Powerful imagery that conveys the fact that via the coming Holy Spirit, Jesus is already and really “present” to the church which continues in his vein. And Jesus is the totality of God. So, no truck with any idea of a “second coming” here. Through his Spirit the Parousia (Presence) of God is already and totally present.

Music at St. Peter's

This Sunday 22nd May at 6.30pm – A festival choir of over 100 singers will sing at the Sylvia Pritchard Memorial concert to include selections from The creation (Haydn) Messiah (Handel) and Five mystical songs (Vaughan Williams)

Sunday 5th June 6.30pm – The Queen's Platinum Jubilee concert with St. Peter's choir and also a contribution from the Benefice Choir.

Thought for the Day

I've just come off the phone to someone quite distraught because she has lost her faith in the aftermath of her husband's death. This is not unusual but every human situation like this is a tragedy because while illness and aging can rob you of your mobility and enjoyment of life, the loss of any guiding light to your life can rob you of any hope, peace of mind, and a reason to live. When those two things happen together as they usually do, it can leave an individual in a wretched position.

I sometimes hear people say that they *want* to believe but just can't. Even that wanting to believe is enough. That mustard seed of trust, hope, faith, whatever is in the words of Jesus enough to move mountains and needs to be kindled but may take time. I believe that even when we may find that we cannot believe in God, that God believes in you. In trying to express their hope in a power greater than themselves, people may express a belief in “the universe” or crystals, or angels, or some spiritual energy, but all belief systems naturally tend towards what Theists call God. The Christian conception of God as being at once unobtainable, transcendent and unknowable and yet at the same time present in every atom and aspect of life and can be called upon at any time is the God I choose to trust to set all creation right gain in the fulness of time. The words of Julian of Norwich I found myself quoting to this lady and I choose to believe that they are true.

That in the end all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.
Thanks be to God.

The Prayer for Today is by the mystic St. Hildegard of Bingen

**Holy Spirit,
Comforting fire,
Life of all creation.
Anointing the sick, cleansing body and soul,
Fill this body!**

**Holy Spirit,
Sacred breath, Fire of love,
Sweetest taste, Beautiful aroma,
Fill this heart!**

**Holy Spirit,
Filling the world,
from the heights to the deep,
Raining from clouds, filling rivers and sea,
Fill this mind!**

**Holy Spirit,
Forgiving and giving,
uniting strangers, reconciling enemies,
Seeking the lost, and enfolding us together,
Fill these gathered here!**

**Holy Spirit,
Bringing light into dark places, igniting praise,
Greatest gift, our Hope and Encourager,
Holy Spirit of Christ,
I praise you!**

Amen.

Love and peace,
Martin