

Dear friends,

Returning from a lovely break in Braunton on Saturday, the roads were clogged with holiday traffic coming and going, producing long queues on all the roads. People are certainly embracing the “staycation” with gusto. All the restaurants were full to bursting in Braunton itself – a problem we anticipated by pre-booking on-line well beforehand. A Romanian waiter (turns out I used to live not far from him in East Bucharest) told us they could have sold every seat three times over. Whatever the papers might be saying, it appears the economy will bounce back quite strongly given our experience last week.

## Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August – Trinity 11 (Proper 16)

This Sunday I am presiding at St. Peter’s at 10am and Rev. Karen Young is presiding at All Saints and St, Michael’s – 9.30 and 11.00am respectively. The lectionary readings are as follows.

**Isaiah 51: 1-6.** Written to a small remnant in exile, Isaiah reminds them that though they are few in number, their whole story started with just two people – Abraham and Sarah. That God produced a nation from such small beginnings he can do again. The creation story is cited referencing creating a new Eden from the ashes but then the lection takes a surprising turn by stating that creation is only temporary. It will “wear out like a garment”. The only reality that will remain in the end is God.

**Romans 12: 1-8.** A passage from Paul that sets up some ethical teaching to come, which says that we should be “transformed by the renewing of our minds”. This is a good description of “Metanoia” the process of being “born again”. Seeing and perceiving things from the perspective of a loving creator God rather than a purposeless pointless accident of nature, leading to a change in the way we act towards each other. Paul introduces the notion of the Christian community as a body, equal as fellow children of God but with different gifts and attributes to contribute to the body as a whole.

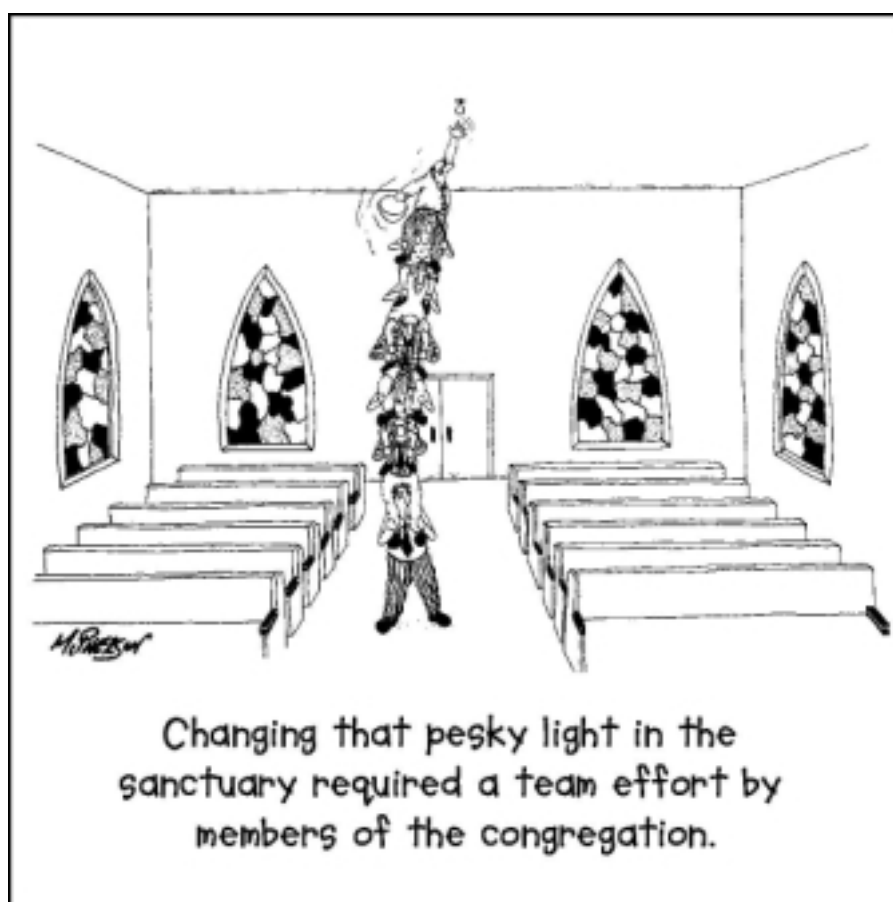
**Matthew 16: 13-20.** This is the turning point in the gospel narrative when Peter, or using his Jewish name “Simon son of Jonah” speaking on behalf of the disciples recognises the true significance of Jesus as being more than a prophet or great religious teacher but is the “Christ”(Greek) , which means the Messiah (Hebrew) which in turn means the anointed one. In a distinctive Christian re-working of that Jewish title Matthew adds “the son of the living God”.

## Meanwhile, Life events continue...

At a graveside funeral service this week at St. Peter's burial ground I thought I would get soaked but instead it was roasting hot. I thought we'd have musical accompaniment, but we sang A Capella. But the hot, serene, and beautiful location was augmented by the family gathering which was respectful, lovely and appreciative and I suddenly struck me that in fact funerals can be beautiful, serene and spiritual occasions that underline the fact that death is an integral part of life, and I am lucky to be involved.

**And** this Saturday we have our first wedding since March at All Saints, East Budleigh. Please pray for our lovely couple Harriet and Dan at 3pm, and also that it won't pour down with rain, after all the great weather we have enjoyed!

## The Lighter side!



The Body of Christ!

## Why God chose you.

During these months of lockdown I have had time to explore spirituality and ethics and matters of religious (Life) importance more thoroughly than one normally has time for. I have learned bucketloads and delved deeper than I've ever gone before and one of the greatest influences on me has become an American catholic Bishop called Bishop Robert Barron and his associated organisation called "Word on fire". I recorded my own reflection last week that dealt with questions of inclusion and exclusion and now I've listened to Bishop Barron's sermon on the same theme but his emphasis is slightly different and missional so I thought I'd include his sermon today. This media savvy Bishop is much more polished than me (we live and learn!) and I encourage you to give him a listen and perhaps find other things by him as well because he is one of the finest Christian apologists I have come across. So, this one is called "Why God chose you." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czM4FZjxwcQ>

## Musical interlude!

"Jesus Children of America" by Stevie Wonder is an old song which I have only just heard on the radio. Enjoy. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnLzU15ANGM>

## Thought for the day

You may have come across a news item/facebook post regarding a parish priest of Chinese ancestry delivering communion by use of chopsticks! I was more than interested in this because Rev. Eileen Harrop is the priest that replaced me in the parish churches at Gainford and Winston in County Durham. Eileen is from Singapore and I note that she uses real bread rather than the wafers that are most commonly used - well, can you imagine trying to use chopsticks to pick up individual wafers? This reminded me that at the church I went to after Gainford and Winston - Tynemouth (Holy Saviours) - we also used bread instead of wafers made from a recipe from the Bible called "Ezekiel bread". You can find the recipe in Ezekiel 4: 9 but as far as I recall we didn't bake it over human dung (verse 12). Obviously, wafers are more convenient (and no crumbs) but I do sometimes miss the symbolism of breaking and blessing a real loaf of bread at communion. Of course bread is used (in whatever form) because of the weight of cultural and religious history and because Jesus said the famous words of institution over bread, so even in countries where rice is the staple, like China, bread is still used in the sacrament of communion but in theory I suppose the symbolism of bread as a necessary staple for life, could be transferred to any staple but I'd feel more

than a little self-conscious lifting up a rice cake or declaring “I am the rice of life”

**The Prayer for Today** is from the Church Mission society and is called the standing prayer because it is prayed standing up!

**God you are so close, yet beyond all containing.  
With countless others around the world  
and through the ages who pray this way:  
I stand before you,  
Help me to seek you always.  
I wait for you,  
Help me to be open to your presence.  
I ready myself,  
Help me to be an answer to the prayers I make.**

Love and peace,  
Martin

Please note my new email address is [vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk](mailto:vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk)