

Dear friends,

Great to be back at All Saints East Budleigh for the first time since the re-start. All is developing well and thank you to Rev. Chris Cant who stepped into the breach and presided at St. Peter's as Karen was taken poorly on Saturday. We pray for a speedy recovery from whatever ails her.

A gorgeous walk from Dartmeet, taking in Tors, moors, woods and bubbling rivers meant negotiating three lots of steppingstones over rivers. The one pictured was over the river Dart. All I can say is that the people who put in these steppingstones must have had very long legs, and when they are not entirely flat either, they present a particular challenge if the water is deep. At our ages this is our version of "extreme sports"



Sunday 26th – Trinity 7 – Proper 12

1 Kings 3:5-12. When asked what God should give him, Solomon famously requests Wisdom – the most highly prized attribute for a near Eastern King. Although the narrative describes Solomon as a child, he may have been around twenty at the time so the description can also be seen as indicating humility as much as his actual age.

Romans 8: 26-39. The final part of chapter 8 articulates the fact that *all things*, meaning the longing of creation, the activity of the Spirit and even man's inarticulate cries do not exist apart from the will of God. God can even use our weakness and turn it to the good. God, foreknew, predestined, called, justified and glorified. The point here is not to figure out who is in and who is out but to emphasise that *God* is the one who designs and desires our salvation. No human can secure it and no human can jeopardize it. God decides and God is love and nothing can separate us from that love.

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52. A collection of parables including the mustard seed and the leaven emphasising how the gospel will grow from a small base and act almost imperceptibly as an agent keeping society configured towards the good, and then the parables of the treasure and the pearl which tell of the incalculable necessity and value of the gospel. We end with the dragnet which is similar to the wheat and tares parable from last week and is typically Matthean in its message of threat and punishment.

Further developments

All Saints has had a Facebook page for a while and now St. Peter's and St. Michael's also have their own pages. These are to provide a window into our churches for people looking in really and will develop under their own steam and here are links to all three.

<https://www.facebook.com/AllSaintsChurchEastBudleigh>

[https://www.facebook.com/search/top?](https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=st%20peter%27s%20church%20budleigh%20salterton)

[q=st%20peter%27s%20church%20budleigh%20salterton](https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=st%20peter%27s%20church%20budleigh%20salterton)

[https://www.facebook.com/search/top?](https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=st%20michael%E2%80%99s%20church%20otterton)

[q=st%20michael%E2%80%99s%20church%20otterton](https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=st%20michael%E2%80%99s%20church%20otterton)

Mary Magdalene.

Today the 22nd July is the feast day of Mary Magdalene, she of a thousand theories about her relationship with Jesus. Probably from Magdala by the sea of Galilee (hence her name tag) Mary was a faithful disciple who stayed

beside the cross during the crucifixion and was the first disciple to discover the empty tomb on Easter Morning. She was privileged with the first appearance of the risen Jesus in my favourite resurrection story in the garden, from which she then told the other disciples so Mary's traditional title has always been the "Apostle to the Apostles."

Thought for the day

I'm just reading an old book by Boris Johnson called "Friends, Voters, countrymen". Say what you like about Boris (and I'm sure you will) I think he is a good and funny writer. Reading or seeing somebody in a slightly different way helps to flesh out their personalities, like watching Michael Portillo indulge his passion for trains, or Angela Rippon dance on the Morcambe and Wise show, or Michael Gove do his trapeze act with his pet monkey Horace on his shoulder (OK, I just made that one up).

What I am really trying to say is that there is always more to people than meets the eye. Behind every person is a vast backstory of experiences (good and bad) accomplishments and failures, shame, careers, funny stories, loves, grievances, passions, family and friends. Most people keep this backstory well hidden from even their friends and usually I get to hear just a fraction of them at their funerals when you can hear even life-long acquaintances say things like "I never knew..." Every person is unique and their personal story is a never to be repeated miracle without which the world would not have been complete without their being part of it. And we are all connected to each other because we all interact with each other in the human equivalent of the butterfly effect. This interconnectedness is why I keep returning to John Donne's famous poem which has a curious effect on me. Every human life is precious and unrepeatable.

'No Man is an Island'

No man is an island entire of itself; every man
is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;
if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe
is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as
well as any manner of thy friends or of thine
own were; any man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind.

And therefore never send to know for whom
the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

Musical interlude!

Some music conjures up a time and a place like nothing else can. It is 300 miles between Bucharest and Sofia and for three years I drove there once a month to cover a service in the Bulgarian capital from my home near the central ring road of the Romanian capital. This six-hour drive over the Danube across Northern Bulgaria was softened by loud Western disco/Dance music propelling me past the police checkpoints. Lady Gaga was one of my own bits of Western excess and exuberance that kept me company along the way.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Abk1jAONjw>

The Prayer for Today is by Anglican Bishop George Appleton

Grant me, O Lord, an understanding heart, that I may see into the hearts of thy people, and know their strengths and weaknesses, their hopes and their despairs, their efforts and their failures, their need of love and their need to love. Through my touch with them grant comfort and hope and the assurance that now life begins at any age and on any day, redeeming the past, sanctifying the present and brightening the future with the assurance of your unfailing love and grace brought to us in Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Love and peace,
Martin

Please note my new email address is vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk