

Dear friends,

Dad's funeral was on the hottest day of the year and my brother (unbeknownst to him) had to help pull the bier from the church to the graveside uphill which nearly killed him. But all went well. As circumstance would have it, I have also been deluged with funerals these past weeks as well but the motivation to make sure they all have the good send off they deserve is perhaps even stronger than before.

The music festival was a great success but left everything in the church in a different place to where it was expected to be! No sooner than that ended, we embarked on the £100,000 extension and improvement to the car park at St. Peter's which means further disruption for seven weeks more – and it should all be finished just in time for....the Budleigh literary festival and more upheaval. A few stiff drinks are called for I think! It'll all be worth it in the end.

Expecting a few absentees because of the car park upheaval, we only put 60 wafers in the ciborium, fearing the worst, so when I saw the attendance of 87 was put up on the board I was elated – followed by rapid addition of communion hosts. Together with the 8am communion, we are breaking 100 at St. Peter's fairly consistently now and we are in good heart. The baptism in the afternoon was another joyous one involving many faces from the literary festival so good cross-over there.

Its all been a bit of a rollercoaster this past week and we chose this Saturday, of all days, to host our garden party at the vicarage. But **Thank you** to everyone who helped, brought food and drink, and just came and enjoyed themselves.



The breath of life

31st July – Trinity 7 (Proper 13)

Reverend Colin Randall will be presiding at St. Peter's and I will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's.

Ecclesiastes 1: 2, 12-14; 2: 18-23. It is a credit to the Bible that it includes so many different voices and points of view. The writer of Ecclesiastes (about 400BC) is a pessimist, unsure about organised religion and recognises the futility of trying to discover the meaning of life through human observation. It is an antidote to those of us who maintain we can see signs of God's goodness in creation. But the writer is a seeker after truth and whether we agree with him or not, it is honesty not doubt that leads him to these conclusions. Hardly the gospel, but rather the gospel is an antidote to such a pessimistic outlook on life.

Colossians 3: 1-11. In total contrast to Ecclesiastes, Paul sees the renewed humanity "in Christ" that we call the church in terms of hope, purpose and virtue. In this renewal, distinctions of race and culture are naturally transcended because we are restored to the virtuous state of Adam, before the "fall from grace".

Luke 12: 13-21. The lure of wealth and possessions and in Luke's opinion the "evil" of it is a mark of his gospel. In the reality of the early church of course, money and property (in which to hold worship) became very important in the growth of the church so there was an internal tension there. Despite this, the eternal significance of love and relationship and virtuous behaviour are set against the transience of material wealth and comfort and the message is unmistakable that God prizes the former over the latter.

Thought for the day.

To my shame I often approach baptisms with a sinking feeling because the gap between the significance the church places on baptism and the significance the family place on it are often poles apart. I have to remind myself that it is the child I am baptising and not uncle George or Cousin Lionel. I have to remind myself that God's grace is living and active and done in faith is effective. People have the legal right to have their child baptised if they live in the parish which is a further layer so there is a theological and

legal imperative to carry baptisms out no matter what I think privately so I long ago decided to make them as meaningful and as relevant as I can, and as thoughtful and thought provoking as I can suited to every family and their needs and circumstances. And then I am brought up short when, despite myself, everything goes swimmingly, people are moved, the child is lovely and smiley, and thanks are profuse. One never knows what seeds are being sown in all these occasional offices (I mean baptisms, weddings and funerals) so a high standard of service is what is required at all times. I also have to remind myself that it isn't all down to me (my lesson of the month!) – that God does have a hand in these things as well, so if we offer the best we can and pray that does the rest. Of course, the personal prayers of all of us are invaluable in trying to make sure that “Thy Kingdom comes” in any and all situations.

The Prayer for Today is by a former archbishop of Canterbury Donald Coggan.

Lord, still me.

Let my mind be inquiring, searching.

Let my heart be open.

Save me from mental rust.

Deliver me from spiritual decay.

Keep me alive and alert.

Teach me, that I may teach them.

Love and peace,
Martin