

Dear friends,

Just a few days to go now before we are allowed to resume services in our three churches. In the meantime, I hope you enjoyed our Filmed Advent service which will be permanently available on the home page of our website. <https://www.raleighmissioncommunity.org.uk/>

## Filmed services

Due to the logistical problems caused by the lockdown, things have not proved easy, but we will now soon start on our filmed Carol service very soon as well as plan for live carol services at all three churches. The time is tight, but necessity is the mother of invention, so they say.

**On that note** we are intending to “Live stream” on our East Budleigh Facebook page the 6pm Christmas Eve Carol service from All Saints East Budleigh. This is a new venture, the technology of which is beyond me, but thank you to Maria and Stephen for taking this on!

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=all%20saints%20church%20east%20budleigh>

## The Advent wreath

There are several traditions about the meaning or theme represented by the five advent candles (and each one thinks theirs is the right one!) but the one that accords best with the lectionary readings is as follows;

Advent 1 – the Patriarchs

Advent 2 – the Prophets

Advent 3 – John the Baptist

Advent 4 – The Virgin Mary

Christmas Day – Jesus Christ

## Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December – Advent 2

Our first live services for a month and I will be presiding at Holy Communion at 9.30am at All saints East Budleigh, John Archibald will be presiding at Morning prayer at St. Michael’s Otterton, and Rev. Karen Young will be presiding at the 8am and 10am at St. Peter’s Budleigh Salterton.

**Isaiah 40: 1-11.** This piece of Isaiah was written while the Jews were in exile in Babylon (587 – 540 BC) so is, as it says a note of “comfort” which is much stronger in Hebrew than in English and conveys a promise of action and hope in the future. The future messianic aspect, that Christians applied to Jesus, was of the promise of a future leader (God himself) “who would feed his flock like a shepherd: he will gather the lambs in his arms” That the imagery from this piece about making straight paths in the desert is used in the opening chapter of Mark’s gospel reading today has ensured it is one of the best known pieces of prophetic writing.

**2 Peter 3: 8-15a.** Peter addresses the fact that the “return” of Jesus is not happening as expected by combatting the scepticism and moral laxity by maintaining the “Day of the Lord” will happen but not according to our limited perspectives and timeframe. When the end comes it will be sudden, not according to any timetable so we should live lives marked by holiness and godliness and peace and righteousness until that time. Those qualities characterize the mood of the Advent season

**Mark 1: 1-8.** The role of “making straight the way of the Lord” is ascribed to John the Baptist by the Christian church. There is continuity and obvious discontinuity between the Jewish religion and the new “way of Jesus” but here great effort is made to portray John as a wild and woolly Old Testament prophet in the wilderness here. The text is saying that however new and unique Jesus may seem, he was no bolt from the blue – he was foretold and expected and in line with Old Testament prophesy.

**Psalm 117.** A very short (I think the shortest) psalm that was on our Bible reading rota yesterday. It speaks of Yahweh as a reality and object of worship for all people everywhere and his love for and faithfulness towards all people everywhere. Short but perfectly formed.

### **Psalm 117**

#### **Universal Call to Worship**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the Lord, all you nations!

Extol him, all you peoples!

<sup>2</sup> For great is his steadfast love toward us,

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord!

## Thought for the day

Theological growth and spiritual insight takes time. Some things that I learned at theological college twenty years ago I am only just fully “receiving” now within my being. Intellectual knowledge is not the same as a *knowing* that permeates your soul. Growth can also be painful because before a new reality emerges there is usually a hiatus between the loss of an old certainty and the acceptance of a new reality. Fr. Richard Rohr calls this process **order – Disorder - reorder**

Some of this Growth comes from books and articles, some through religious engagement and prayer or contemplation, but I’d say most of it comes from life itself. Surely that is as it should be. At Christmas we celebrate the fact that God is incarnate. The divine, the universal Christ is embedded in all matter. We celebrate Emmanuel – God is with us. Matter matters and God is the god of all things. That God is present and works through any and everything is crucial to understanding how the sacraments “work” and the Eucharist in particular. I have been reminded this week of something that I learned many years ago but now suddenly it has become a lived reality for me that in the bread of the Eucharist we commune with God and all creation – we become who we truly are – the bread is “the whole of creation” and when we drink from the cup (when you are allowed again) we identify ourselves with all unjust suffering that has ever or will ever take place from every hurt feeling to the foulest genocide, all symbolised by the crucified body of Christ. The feeling that this realisation produces when the scales fall from our eyes is what I interpret the Biblical concept of Metanoia to embody. God is with us. It is only ever not with us when I *think* he isn’t.

**The Prayer for Today** is from the online prayer forum “sacred space”

### **Freedom**

**Lord grant me the grace  
to have freedom of the spirit.  
Cleanse my heart and soul  
so I may live joyously in your love.**

Love and peace,  
Martin

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