

Dear friends,

Despite a bad back and sore knee – who knows where they came from; I just woke up with them – I am feeling very buoyant at the moment. I know, I know I shouldn't get over preoccupied with “bums on seats” but edging over one hundred and sixteen at the morning services at St. Peter's for the first time since before Covid feels to me like a bit of a watershed moment. There was even a youngster! (Don't worry - we'll tell him he can't come again – only Joking) who delighted in conducting the choir and me. The atmosphere was joyous, and we lifted the roof during the final hymn. I hope and pray that St. Michael's and All Saints had similar experiences. Of course, our team – Intrepid – winning the new year quiz on Saturday night was a huge surprise as I don't normally win anything at these events but more importantly everybody enjoyed a superb evening hosted by our suave compere Tony.

Four funerals over the next couple of weeks of course keeps the mind focussed on other serious things and the mystery of life and death and new life.

Now the Christmas and Epiphany season is in the rear-view mirror we enter a period of what we call “ordinary time” until the season of Lent that starts on Ash Wednesday on 2nd March.

Sunday 6th February – 4 before Lent. (Epiphany 5 in the lectionary) – Proper 1

Archdeacon Trevor Jones is presiding at both services at St. Peter's, I am presiding at the 9.30am service at All Saints and John Archibald is presiding at a service of the word at St. Michael's.

Isaiah 6: 1-8 (9-13). The opening words are less concerned with dating this vision (circa 734 BC) than with contrasting a dead earthly king with the enthroned and eternal heavenly king. Any visionary experience usually comes to people via the symbols and thought forms of their world because to be transmitted and make sense they must draw on shared and available symbols and Isaiah uses the imagery of Temple and Royalty to convey the otherwise indescribable. God graciously removes his sense of unworthiness, and in response Isaiah offers immediate and unconditional service.

1 Corinthians 15: 1-11. Paul recitation of the foundational death, buried and raised on the third day and the resurrection appearances (Who

the 500 were nobody knows – there is no other reference in the Bible) all lead up to his own vision of the risen Christ which Paul asserts is equivalent to the ones experienced by the other disciples. Because he was so unworthy, his experience of divine Grace propelled him to even greater acts of evangelism than all the others

Luke 5: 1-11. As a model of discipleship, Simon does what Jesus asks even though he had misgivings. And like Isaiah, Simon is aware of his sinfulness but is commissioned by the authority of God in Christ to go and fish for people instead of fish. Disdain towards possessions is a recurring theme in Luke meant to highlight the primary call of God on a disciple's life.

A Seat at the table: engaging church members with science

Wednesday 9th February

Refreshments from 7 pm, meeting starts at 7.30 pm.

**St Peter's Church, The Lawn,
Budleigh Salterton. EX9 6LT**

You are invited to a meeting to learn more about how you can engage with science in Devon. Speakers from Exeter University will tell you about some of the research going on at Exeter University and what opportunities there are to get involved in the design and delivery of research projects. Your views on research are always welcome!

Everyone is welcome. We are advertising in churches around Devon but feel free to invite friends who don't come to church.

On the 12th February, as already trailed, we are inviting RMC people to a day of prayer and discernment that will take place at All Saints church in Sidmouth from 10am -4pm, the aim of which is to engender a sense of unity and purpose. Thank you to everyone who has offered to help in the

kitchen with teas and coffees. People should take a packed lunch. Louise and I have been to Sidmouth to see the lay of the land. Parking is available next to the church and the church has been offered to us free of charge but I think it only right to collect a retiring donation for them to say thank you!

Joint PCC meeting on 15th February.

Just to confirm that the original date of 22nd February was changed because I am on holiday that week.

Thought for the Day

Part of the genius and torment of the human condition is never being at home in your own skin, always wishing you lived somewhere else, were doing something else, being unsatisfied with your life, your family, your friends your looks, how much you earn etc.

This constant dissatisfaction with the way things are, is of course, on the one hand, the motor behind all innovation, change for the better, and improvement to your lot. But the shadow side of this impulse is a constant gnawing dissatisfaction with life, which leads to family breakdowns, depression, and a sense of hopelessness.

A classic Christian explanation of this anomaly advanced by Fr. Richard Rolheiser is that human beings are made for communion with all things and yet our lives are lived against a lived reality of finite choices between one thing and another thing. This he calls “the insufficiency of everything attainable.”

A concrete example of this is that in theory one man could theoretically marry any one of millions and millions of women. To marry one woman is to deliberately restrict this theoretical choice. One positive choice means a million renunciations.

The insufficiency of everything attainable can torment a soul until you start to see your life as lived against an infinite horizon and you start to see God – the eternal – in the ordinary. When we see our lives that way, we can see the timeless in the everyday, providence in our common encounters, Gethsemane in our common pains, destiny in our common loves, the finger of God in our common stories and our own common unfinished symphony as part of the great eternal symphony of God. And it is there that we find peace.

The prayer for Today is written by Miriam Therese Winter

**I love you O God,
My love, my warmth, my solace, my fulfilment.
All that I am, all that I do
Finds meaning and purpose in you.
Fill me with the full force of your Love
And its passionate splendour,
So that I might hold and heal all those crying out for love.
Love through me all the unreconciled
Whose homes and hearts are broken,
And let them know I am able to love
Because you have first loved me.**

Love and peace,
Martin