

Dear friends,

Louise's parents staying with us this weekend spurred us on to dip our toes into the local entertainment scene and we had a lovely time at the Manor theatre watching "Emma" on Thursday evening, listening to an organ recital at St. Peter's on Friday lunchtime given by the organist of Rennes cathedral in Brittany – Jean-Rene Andre (which was excellent and so well attended) and a concert on Saturday night as part of the Sidmouth folk festival by Eddi Reader. That last one was a punt, but we really enjoyed ourselves and we have come out the other end feeling blessed that we live in a part of the world where there is so much to choose from, and the RMC makes its own contribution to that local scene, from concerts, to open gardens, to scarecrow festivals to name but a few.

**We were blessed** also by two lovely services at East Budleigh and Otterton so by the end of the weekend following a trying couple of weeks we have landed on the other side feeling that life is good – Mum and Dad are reunited in God – and my Father-in-law Dave fixed out toilet seats and cleaned our carpets!



Be still and know that I am God

**The concert** in St. Peter's last Friday was the last in this particular series but the Autumn programme is already booked and ready to be inserted into your diaries. £7 per person.

## Autumn lunchtime concerts at St. Peter's

Friday 7th October at 1.30 Ian Curror – organ

Friday 14th October at 1.30 “Pieces of eight” directed by Mark Perry

Friday 21st October at 1.30 Stephen Tanner – Organ

Friday 28th October at 1.30 Stephen Bell - Organ

## Sunday 8th August – Trinity 8 (Proper 14)

I will be presiding at St Peter's at both services, Chris Cant will be presiding at All Saints East Budleigh at 9.30 and John Archibald will be presiding at St. Michael's at 11am.

**Genesis 15: 1-6.** “He believed the Lord and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (verse 6) is a small sentence but packs a large punch in St. Paul's theology that says that Grace predates and is superior to the law of Moses. Abraham is made right with God (Justified) by simple faith in God's promise not by observing any religious laws. Abraham predates Moses coming down Mount Sinai by several centuries so provides the rationale for Christians throwing off the Jewish law and also the mandate for the doctrine of Justification by faith alone

**Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16.** The author of Hebrews uses the faith of Abraham to paint a picture of what faith looks like. People of faith are motivated “by things unseen”, knowing that their true home is elsewhere, not in time or space but in another dimension called in shorthand – “heaven”.

**Luke 12: 32-40.** These people of faith who recognise that their home is in “heaven” then live their lives according to the values and nature of God and store up spiritual treasures that accord with that way of living as interpreted by their understanding of scripture, God and the revelation of Jesus Christ.

## Thought for the day

“What’s so amazing about Grace?” is a book by Phillip Yancy that we had to read as a congregation some two decades ago and the question is one that needs posing and answering often. Grace is the completely unmerited and cost-free (to us) saving, forgiving love of God as revealed in the life death and resurrection of Christ. That this Grace can be applied to us personally causes us no problem whatsoever. The part of that definition that always causes friction and conflict is the word “unmerited”. So, people ask “so you mean He loves even every scoundrel, liar cheat, killer, exploiter or dictator - they are loved equally by God - Loves them as much as me?”. Well in a word – yes. It is a central belief of the Christian faith that Jesus died “for the whole world” as we say in the eucharistic prayer, so every person, no matter what we think of them is loved equally by God (even while their behaviour might grieve Him) . It is also axiomatic to Christianity that “we are all sinners” – yes even me and you! While we like to measure ourselves against other people we consider bigger sinners than ourselves, God, from his perspective doesn’t see much of a difference. Once people get that, Grace can often change from being “amazing” to “scandalous” very quickly and we morph into the elder son in the prodigal son parable (who resented the love the Father shows to his younger brother) very quickly. What we are feeling are natural human emotions and reactions to what is essentially divine love and forgiveness, and as we know “God’s thoughts and his ways and his wisdom are far higher than ours.” Human limitations can only be exceeded by divine grace and appreciating that God’s mercy and forgiveness extend beyond our own orbit takes a shift in our own thinking. It depends on us learning a lot of humility (not something we are generally good at) and sitting under God, appreciating what he is doing for us and not resenting his love being extended to others that we don’t personally approve of. This is hard stuff. Christianity is not for the fainthearted. The parable that sums up God’s attitude to sinning is the woman caught in adultery in John’s gospel. There is no question that the woman was an adulteress because she was caught in the act, but Jesus challenges the crowd to throw the first stone if they themselves had never sinned and eventually dismisses the woman. Of course, he sends her off with the words “Go and sin no more”. The basis of our confession on a Sunday morning is that we all sin, we should be aware

of it, confess it, receive God's promise of forgiveness and then "Go and sin no more" having straightened out our lives. Repentance is Key.

**The Prayer for Today** is popularly known as the Jesus prayer and comes to us from the Eastern orthodox tradition.

**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

Love and peace,  
Martin