

Dear friends,

It was lovely to be invited to a garden party by Lord and Lady Clinton last week (where both the Bishops of Exeter and Plymouth were present-best behaviour!!), and to go to Sidmouth Manor pavilion theatre to see a very funny French farce, but the stand-out moment for me during the week was seeing my first ever adder on the path on Woodberry common. Genuinely exciting, Louise took a photo but not sure if you'll be able to see it.



We also decided to enter the 21st century by buying a Bluetooth speaker and a cordless vacuum cleaner. As someone who hardly got my head around the video recorder and was a very late adopter of CDs and DVDs it may be just something else I struggle to get to work though I admit that for such a tiny portable thing, the sound quality is extraordinary.

Sunday 8th August – 10th after Trinity – Proper 14

This Sunday I am presiding at St. Peter's and Fr. Peter is at All Saints and St. Michael's where there is also a baptism in the service. I am back at St. Peter's for another baptism at 2pm.

1 Kings 19: 4-8. Elijah has just won a major victory on Mount Carmel, and proved that the God of Israel was more powerful than Baal yet the threats of Queen Jezebel made in the name of the God he has just disproved causes him to flee, broken and rejected. I think we all recognise this scenario. No matter how well you are doing or how great a list of successes you have one setback, one piece of criticism, can reduce you to unrealistic despair. But God perseveres and leads him to Mount Sinai (Horeb) to renew his prophetic mission. It is when we abandon self-pity and concentrate on God's provision that pulls us back to reality.

Ephesians 4: 25 – 5:2. The ethical teaching here has its roots in the theology of the church which as an interdependent body, needs to run as smoothly as is possible. The fact that this kind of thing had to be written at all should blow away any illusions we may have had about the nature of the early church. Maliciousness and unkind behaviour have always been in fashion!

John 6: 35, 41-51. "Complain" used here in Hebrew is more like disgruntled murmuring and you can see why. They were perturbed first by Jesus' humble and unacademic background, and then by his appealing above their heads directly to God to indicate how people would be drawn to him. "Eternal life" is being re-interpreted to start now instead of just after death for the righteous. Calling this spiritual food his "flesh" still shocks and is meant to convey the carnal materiality of the Eucharist. Real food and real drink – real flesh and real blood.

The talk and presentation of the painting of Roger Conant called "Blessed are the peacemakers" went very well and the audience seemed very appreciative. The historical and artistic presentations by Michael Downes and John Washington respectively were marvellous. We'll present the proposal to hang the painting in All Saints at our next PCC meeting. John is also planning to make a jigsaw of the painting that could be sold to raise funds.

Thought for the day.

It would be hard for any of you not to notice that we have embraced walking since arriving in Devon. There is of course a whole theology of walking called pilgrimage and there are a number of them already in Devon, both long and short. Well, the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the 18th September, is opening another new 12 mile round “pilgrimage” route starting at St. Andrew’s church Feniton (near Honiton) called Patterson’s way, taking in churches along the way significant to the life of John Patterson who became a missionary and founded the church in Melanesia and became its first Bishop. I had come across Melanesian monks at Mirfield and their chaplain in the UK Reverend Richard Carter was also at Mirfield studying while I was there so it is a strange set of coincidences that link all of this together. Twelve miles is a long haul for many of us I know but perhaps if we can break that down into one or two parts, it would be great to get as many people from the RMC walking our very own pilgrimage route from church to church right here in Devon, perhaps meeting up for our packed lunches in Ottery St. Mary for example. We’ll investigate possibilities, see what is doable for different abilities and for those who couldn’t contemplate doing any walking at all they can pray for our churches and the spiritual enlightenment of all of us – not just those doing the walking! Perhaps there is mileage in a church walking group who do the pilgrimage walks while others pray for them and our mission here in our area? For more information on this new pilgrimage route, about to be inaugurated, please just click on this link to the Exeter Diocesan website.

<https://exeter.anglican.org/archbishop-justin-welby-to-open-new-melanesia-pilgrimage-route-in-devon/>

The Prayer for Today.

I suppose I could have used the prayer for walkers I found last week which might have been appropriate, but I happened upon this delightful prayer poem by our very own Di Bagshawe from her book “Introspection” (originally sold to raise funds for St. Michael’s Otterton) called The Spirit.

**What is this we call the Spirit?
Is it the conscience pricking
That keeps us on the narrow road?
Is it the uplifting feeling
That fills us when we meet in church?
Is it the friend who goes the extra mile
To help when life’s path is stormy?
Is it the sense of peace
When we put everything in God’s hands?**

**Is it the appreciation of beauty,
A plant pot in a city, a contented face?
These and so much more I believe,
For there is no place, no action
No thought and no emotion
That is not known and shared.
Spirit is our link with Christ
And through Christ to our Father,
Our faith anchor, our support,
The everlasting parting gift
When our Lord left this earth.**

Love and peace,
Martin

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