

Dear friends,

Uncertainty over how many wafers to put in the ciborium is an unseen concern in every service but things went a little awry at Sunday's main 10am service at St. Peter's. We normally put eighty wafers in as a matter of course, so when I processed out at the start of the service and saw 96 on the board (put there to guide us) I thought that would suffice as "normally" a certain amount of people don't come up for communion and with a few surreptitious breakings in half I thought we'd get through. But as the ciborium got emptier and emptier and the queue to receive communion seemed to lengthen and lengthen I was furiously breaking wafers into smaller and smaller fragments to cope. At the end of the service the counter at the back said 106 – some people had arrived late and hadn't been counted and some had obviously escaped being counted by coming in the disabled access door. Who knows how many were actually there in the end but it's a small problem when set against the wonderful situation we find ourselves in.

Note: There will be no email next week as I will be visiting my daughter Claire in York and Louise's brother in hospital in Lancaster.

Sundays at six

Our new musical venture got off to a flying start when between 80 and 100 people turned up for the first one of the short season (we don't count numbers at these things) inaugurated by a wonderful performance by the French organist from Rennes cathedral, Jean-Rene Andre. There was a retiring collection and the plate looked to be overflowing – so all good for our music budget! Next Sunday we are treated to a recital by our old friend David Davis, former assistant organist at Exeter cathedral and Buckfast Abbey.

Green shoots

One of our members of the congregation at Otterton St. Michael's has put herself forward for training to become a LLM (licensed lay minister) which means that eventually she would be deployed across all three churches. And Stephen, who has aspirations to become a vicar (I baptised him on Easter Sunday) is being confirmed on the 12th June at Holy Trinity Exmouth. Please pray for Stacey and Stephen as they discern their vocation.

Sunday 5th May – 6th of Easter

Reverend Colin Randall will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's. Reverend Jean Burrows will be presiding at All Saints at 9.30am and John Archibald will preside at St. Michael's at 11am.

Acts 10: 44-48. There is no systematic understanding of Baptism that can be gleaned from the New Testament. Sometimes the Holy Spirit comes after Baptism and sometimes as in this instance, very much beforehand which provided the basis for Baptism. It just illustrates that as much as we like to package everything into neat packages, the Spirit of God cannot be tied down and blows where he wills.

1 John 5: 1-6. It has long been surmised what the "water and the blood" means and probably the majority view is that it refers to Baptism and Eucharist respectively, and

that their spirit-filled physicality replicates the physicality of Jesus Christ. That believers will conquer “the world” can seem a tad optimistic for this tiny collection of followers who couldn’t even stay united themselves, but the “world” included not only the physical world (of which they were aware of only partially) but also the heavens and the spiritual world, and faith will conquer all evil.

John 15: 9-17. The ancient world reflected often and deeply on the nature of friendship. Friendship was a relationship between equals (a master couldn’t be friends with his slave). They kept no secrets from each other – especially not Jesus’ close interrelationship with the Father. They would love and serve each other even to the point that they would lay down their lives for them if it came to that. “You are my friends if you do what I command you” you can imagine a bully saying to others in the playground, but Jesus’ commands are to love each other. Jesus “chose” his disciples not for anything that He could get out of them, but out of love.

Thought for the Day

One of my oldest friends from the Anglican church congregation in Bulgaria is currently on a Super Trip with her husband and sends out wonderful updates and reflections on what is going on. She is a superb writer who displays a real talent for description and spiritual insight. For my own Sabbatical in 2025 I hope to do even half as well in relaying my thoughts and impressions from South and South-east Asia. The premise is to observe how Christians fare and operate in three cultures, one predominantly Muslim (Malaysia), one predominantly Hindu (India) and one predominantly Buddhist (Sri Lanka). The Sabbatical is eight months away but is involving huge amounts of planning, not least how to keep in contact with people while we are away. Just as Jean Burrows did during her time in Tanzania, I will be sending periodic updates of how things are and what we are experiencing, followed by occasional evenings when we return to discuss what we found. While we are away, greater strain will be put on our wonderful, retired priests of course and I am immensely grateful for everything they do and will be doing. Three months seems like a long time but will be over in a flash. Both Louise and I are a bit nervous, but we have our shared faith to guide us and sustain us through whatever situation life throws at us. I’ll end by quoting yet again my favourite phrase that guides and inspires me, written by Mother Julian all those centuries ago. “All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well”.

The prayer for Today

AN IRISH BLESSING

**May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.
May God be with you and bless you:
May you see your children’s children.
May you be poor in misfortune,
rich in blessings.
May you know nothing but happiness
From this day forward.**

**May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home,
And may the land of a friend always be near.
May green be the grass you walk on,
May blue be the skies above you,
May pure be the joys that surround you,
May true be the hearts that love you.**

Love and peace,
Martin