

Dear friends,

Over a two-night mid-week break in Dartmoor we walked 16.9 miles and climbed 119 floors (according to Louise's iPhone). Might not seem a lot to you spring chickens out there but a major achievement for us and is good training for trekking in Nepal next month.

**But the** major event in the life of the RMC is the replacement and renewal of every order of service booklet across all the churches for every season. This could only be achieved by a very generous donation by Sheila Jelley at St. Peter's and the hardwork of Rev'd. Colin Randall. The changeover will happen this week. I'm quite nervous about their being a hitch or two but the new orders of service, with a fair wind behind us should be operational this coming Sunday. All the old orders of service will be collected together and sent to St. Peter's where Colin has kindly agreed to dispose of them.

### **Sunday 8th September – Trinity 15 – Proper 18**

I will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's and the Rev'd. Colin Randall will preside at All Saints and Otterton at 9.30am and 11.00am respectively. I will then preside at Choral Evensong at 6.00pm at St. Peter's.

**Isaiah 35: 4-7a.** If the people perish without a vision (Proverbs 29.18 – some translations) here is a vision of future salvation to all people currently in despair. I always have a negative reaction to Judgement (probably says a lot about me), but here it is presented as a wonderful vision of all wrongs righted and even the burning sand will become a soothing pool of cool water.

**James 2:1-10 (11-13) 14-17.** The meat in the sandwich today is very meaty indeed starting with a savage put-down of anyone who favours the rich over the poor. Partiality arrived at on the basis of a person's wealth is un-Christian. Faith without works is dead (2;17) is the most famous verse written by James and is simply a call to integrity of words and actions. Failure to do that makes us hypocrites ("actors" – Greek) who say the words only – one of Jesus' favourite admonitions.

**Mark 7:24-37.** Attempts to soften what Jesus said, like saying he used a diminutive term for dogs (Little doggies) in a teasing way, or that he was just testing the woman's faith are interesting. To call someone a dog is always insulting so it is strange but I prefer to picture Jesus saying the words with a smirk on his face (Can you imagine Jesus smirking!). Whatever, Jesus always goes beyond what it expected or imagined, and this gentile woman's daughter is healed as was the man in the region of the Decapolis (a predominantly gentile area.)

Everything is unexpectedly and surprisingly better than could be expected and the scope of salvation wider than people commonly thought.

**Gift day.** The gift day for St. Peter's church is coming upon us soon. On Saturday the 14th September in the morning, I, our treasurer, and our gift aid overseer will all be in St. Peter's church ready to receive financial gifts to the church. I, Tony and Judith and others no doubt will be there to receive, ask questions and talk about the financial situation. While regular monthly giving is preferred (and there will be someone ready to sign you up if that's what you decide to do), many people like to give in one lump sum – or both! Whichever way it arrives, be sure we are truly grateful. As the largest church in Budleigh Salterton, we can only make sure that we can continue our ministry by ensuring that the gap between our annual expenditure and our income is narrowed considerably. Of course, we do have reserves but our reserves will not last forever.

### Thought for the Day

Forgiveness is a hard thing for anyone to do. And Christians often use the word too freely and glibly and this does no-one any favours, especially when a wife or husband has been cheated on, or an old lady gets swindled, or a man scams you in a business deal or a child is abused or someone punches you in the face for no reason. Just a few of hundreds of different reasons for which you may feel aggrieved and find it difficult to forgive. The first thing to agree upon amongst ourselves is that forgiveness is very hard indeed and often feels impossible. Coming to terms with that one fact we achieve common ground. If there is no remorse on the other side, that makes things even more difficult. Forgiveness is so central to our faith, and we pray "Father forgive us as we forgive them" everytime we pray the Lord's prayer. And practically speaking that is the key. It is reciprocal – we should forgive because we ourselves are forgiven by God. To truly forgive is a divine gift that often eludes us mere mortals. Praying for the ability to forgive even while finding it so difficult, and knowing that we want to forgive even when we can't is the real life situation most of us find ourselves in. Accept the truth that you find it hard, that you can't, etc and pray for the divine gift of forgiveness in God's time. We all know that the inability to forgive eats us up more than the other person anyway, so the inability just harms ourselves at the end of the day, so the "other" wins both ways – they have hurt you and you continue to hurt yourself. We don't want that to happen, because God wants us to lead a life in all its fulness and we can't really do that whilst harbouring all this bitterness and regret and wanting to get revenge. What we want to achieve in life is "The peace of God that passes all understanding".

**The Prayer for Today** is the collect for purity also familiar to us as the prayer of preparation, an ancient prayer commonly thought to have been translated into English by Thomas Cranmer. I always think it is one of the most beautiful prayers in the English language.

**Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy Holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Love and peace,

Martin