

Dear friends,

We have a new Bishop of Exeter! The Right Rev'd Dr Mike Harrison. This was formally announced yesterday by Downing street after being approved by King Charles. He becomes the 72nd Bishop of Exeter and joins us from East Anglia where he is the current suffragan Bishop of Dunwich. He is married the Rachel and have four adult children.

As a marker as to how unfit I've become, our nine-mile circular walk from Drewsteignton nearly crippled me! My feet were pounding, and my back is aching. I'd never appreciated before how hilly Devon is before we came to live here. By comparison my seventy-eight-year-old Father-in-law coped much better than me which might be a bit of a wakeup call.

But it was lovely to feel the sunshine and after the services on Sunday morning we all spent a lovely time on the seafront at Budleigh. Scallop and bacon rolls at the longboat café (now owned by Rockfish apparently) never tasted so good.

The Famous East Budleigh Scarecrow festival kicks off next Saturday for two days and it's all hands to the pump. By convention there is no service at All Saints church in the morning because everyone is helping out elsewhere but the whole weekend is capped off by the Scarecrow songs of praise at 6pm on Sunday Evening. The vicarage garden hosts the classic car exhibition as usual and this year spiderman has been replaced by batman as our offering on the scarecrow front (I wish we were more creative, but we can't be good at everything!) This event is organised by the "Friends of All Saints" and raises thousands of pounds for the fabric of the church every year.

Sunday 9th June – Trinity 2 (Proper 5)

I am presiding at both services at St. Peter's and Rev. Colin Randall is presiding at St. Michael's in Otterton at 11am (No service at All Saints). I will then preside at the Scarecrow Songs of Praise at 6pm at All Saints and Rev. Colin Randall will preside at Choral Evensong at St. Peter's also at 6pm.

Genesis 3: 8-15. God feigns ignorance of what has happened and asks questions of Adam and Eve. What is exposed is the classic human failing of trying to avoid responsibility and blame others. Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent for disobeying God's clear command. Mankind has the ability to discern and make moral choices, but generally lacks the wisdom and integrity to go along with that ability.

2 Corinthians 4: 13 – 5: 1. Paul quotes a psalm from the Septuagint version of the Bible (115:1) which corresponds to our 116: 10. Unfortunately the Greek used differs significantly from the Hebrew so the translation does not appear in our Bibles at all, but he is trying to emphasise the continuity they share with Judaism while also introducing a completely new element into their framework – Jesus Christ. The God who raised Jesus will raise us also. The "earthly tent" could refer to our physical bodies or conceivably the world we live in, but whichever is meant we have nothing to fear for God has prepared an eternal building for us.

Mark 3: 20-35. Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark has no idealised view of Jesus' family, and they are presented here as either indifferent, hostile or uncomprehending. His true family here is presented as his "spiritual" mother brothers and sisters (Those who do the will of God) rather than his biological ones so no "Christian family values" here. We also encounter the "unforgiveable sin" of Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which from the text means taking manifest goodness and Godly encounter and calling it evil.

Thought for the Day

One of my old friends from the North is visiting me this weekend which is very exciting. He is on a tour of the South in much the same way as we did a tour of the North a few weeks ago. I remember him describing himself rather cryptically as "an atheist with an interest in the Divine" and with other friends they were an enormous help to me in the aftermath of my wife's death all those years ago. I was glad I could partially repay that help in part at the occasion of his mother's death sometime later. Knowing Buddhists personally opened my eyes to a deeper spirituality than I had ever known previously and I always say that this was the time when I grew further and faster than at any other time in my life. Obviously, I wouldn't wish the trauma of a death on anybody but it is a universal truth that traumatic events are the greatest motor for spiritual growth that we know. And you can't manufacture that circumstance, you simply have to experience it when it happens and weather the long grieving process. The reason wisdom is often associated with great age, is simply because older people have experienced more and have had to weather many different storms in their lives. It also gave me a much greater perspective on the gifts that other faith traditions bring to the table. Operating from a strong Christian religious belief, other faith traditions have the potential to enhance our lives and perspectives and insights into this mystery we call Life.

The Prayer for Today is Buddhist in origin but I lifted it from the Jesuit (catholic) "Xavier university" website that was promoting dialogue between different faith traditions.

**May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness;
May all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow;
May all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is sorrowless;
And may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment and too much aversion,
And live believing in the equality of all that lives.**

Love and peace,
Martin