

Dear friends,

Harvest festival was celebrated in style on Sunday morning. Saint Peter's looked fantastic and there was plenty of donated produce that will go to the foodbank of course, and the celebration lunch was spectacular. Mandy excelled yet again with a wonderful buffet and it was made better for Louise because old Oxford university friends who she last saw three years ago joined us for the service and the meal en-route to their holiday in South Hams.

**Dame Sarah Mullally** is the new Archbishop of Canterbury as I'm sure everyone now knows. I only ever met her once in passing because she chaired my selection interview panel that led to me becoming the vicar here in the RMC. I confess she was simply one face amongst nine others and I gather Lord Clinton made the decision to appoint me.

**Note:** There will be no email next week as I'll be on holiday.

### **Sunday 12th October – Trinity 17 – Proper 23**

Robert Charles will be presiding at both morning services at St. Peter's. Archdeacon Trevor Jones will have the busiest day presiding at both All Saints and St. Michael's in the morning at 9.30 and 11am respectively and will then preside at choral evensong at St. Peter's at 6pm.

**2 kings 5: 1-3,7-15.** Although the commander's ailment is translated as leprosy in most Bibles, according to my research true leprosy was unknown at this time so the Hebrew word probably meant some kind of eczema. However Naaman, thought he was too high and mighty to accept so simple a cure as directed by the prophet Elisha. He also rejected the idea that anything so insignificant in Israel could match anything in his homeland. However, when he was finally persuaded to overcome his misplaced pride and prejudice he was cured.

**2 Timothy 2: 8-15.** A letter exhorting us to remain steadfast to the core of the faith which is Jesus Christ raised from the dead. Paul, (or an author adopting the mantle of Paul) is not a man for group discussions, in the modern way finding each other's views "interesting". This he contends only puts outsiders listening to the conversation off the gospel completely. So we should keep our internal divisions and disputes close to our chest but this is nearly impossible in the digital age.

**Luke 17: 11-19.** The main theme of this parable is the duty of being grateful to God. But the context is important too. Leprosy (or any ailment) rendered you unclean and would exclude you from worship at the Temple. So Jesus steps across that barrier and cures them, thus restoring them to both social and religious community. That is the point of showing themselves to the priest. The presence of the Samaritan also points to a kind of Christian inclusivity (although in fact a Samaritan would hardly have accepted that he needed the affirmation from a mainstream Jewish priest)

### **Thought for the Day**

I wish the new Archbishop of Canterbury well personally but in the words of an old song "There may be trouble ahead". In appointing a woman as Archbishop of Canterbury the Crown nominations committee have made a firm choice in favour of

gender inclusivity over church unity and that is just a factual statement. The vast majority of Anglicans in the world live not in Britain but in Africa (and the rest of the world) as a result of our colonial outreach and we were already in impaired communion with them anyway since 2008. Because of what they perceived as the church of England caving in to the secular zeitgeist they formed what is known as Gafcon (Global Anglican future conference). This grouping is not insignificant as they represent a whopping 85% of confessing Anglicans worldwide. Significantly they have called another conference in Nigeria in March next year to discuss the current development, and a complete schism is definitely on the cards.

But in England too the divisions could cause serious fracturing of the church of England. There are around 500 church of England churches that reject woman's ordination outright, some Anglo-Catholic but also a lot of conservative evangelical churches as well including some of the biggest churches in England. St. Leonards in Exeter is a large and popular one in our vicinity that rejects women's ordination for example. Once they have thought about it, there is the clear potential for outright splits because if you reject women's ordination what on earth do you do when the supreme Bishop in your own communion is a woman? We have seen in the USA over recent years the resultant squabbles over congregations leaving the communion, not least regarding property rights for if they want to leave the official church structures they also have to vacate the church building as well. Some painful decisions need to be made and I haven't even mentioned same-sex marriages, net zero targets, reparations for colonial "crimes" and ongoing safeguarding issues. No wonder the selection process took so long. Did I hear someone mention a poisoned chalice?

**The Prayer for Today.** It might seem incongruous after what I have just written about the C of E choosing gender inclusivity over unity, but this is a prayer for unity directly from the church of England's website.

**Heavenly Father,  
you have called us in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ  
to continue his work of reconciliation  
and reveal you to the world:  
forgive us the sins which tear us apart;  
give us the courage to overcome our fears  
and to seek that unity which is your gift and your will;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

Love and peace,

Martin