

Dear friends,

**Friday** was an exhausting day because we walked to Sidmouth and back. It is not much the distance as the hills that wore me out, although 9 miles is quite a test. Still, it will be good practice for trekking in Nepal in October. It was a hot day as well, but it was thinking of my brother-in law Andrew recovering from a stroke, who would relish the chance to do anything like that that made us feel very blessed indeed. Indeed, Andrew is learning to walk with a frame now. He was told he would never walk again, and in the immediate aftermath of his stroke which affected 90% of the right side of his brain and was given a 10% chance of surviving at all, is a miracle in itself.

**St. Peter's** on Sunday included a tribute to Bishop Tim Dudley Smith who died last week. He was a prolific hymn writer who composed 400 hymns so we changed the last hymn to the one described by John Betjeman as "one of the few modern hymns that will truly last". "Tell out my soul" is a musical rendition of the Magnificat and this was also appropriate because last Thursday the church celebrated the Blessed Virgin Mary.

#### **Sunday 25th August – Trinity 13 – Proper 16**

Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at both services at St. Peter's, and I will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9,30am and 11am respectively.

**Joshua 24: 1-2a, 14-18.** A choice is set before the Jewish people. Serve the Lord or the other local gods which proliferated around them. It was decision time, and communally they decided to follow the Lord after remembering all that He had done for them. It raises the question of the nature of loyalty. People occasionally need to be reminded what has been done for them and that the relationship is based on mutual love and care.

**Ephesians 6: 10-20.** We are reminded that our real enemies are not physical but spiritual and psychological. The author of Ephesians draws a parallel with Physical armour. He gives truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the word of God a counterpart in armour worn at the time. These will help protect you against doubt and cynicism and the lies that we encounter in our daily lives.

**John 6: 56-69.** Jesus has said some things that were very difficult to get your head around and people start to desert Jesus. Jesus asks his inner circle whether they too will go, and Peter speaks for them all when he replies "Where would we go? You have the words of eternal life". Jesus has said some things that are hard to digest, but they remember all the wisdom, the signs and other indications that God is with him, and decide that despite what has just occurred, they are sticking with him. They remain loyal to God.

**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 Today

Loyalty to the Christian faith is a funny business. We remain loyal for many reasons. Even when the institutional church does something reprehensible or just incompetent, most people remain loyal but some fade away. Even those of us who have children who no longer attend church, there remains among many of them a residual loyalty to what they remember and grew up with. Some of them will retain a loyalty to the person of Jesus even though their loyalty to a particular expression of Christianity may have faded. Remaining loyal to our individual parish church is where most Christians are at the end of the day. We may attend a different church from time to time, but we mostly return to what we consider our home. Of course, that loyalty can change because of other factors such as churchmanship, friendships or perhaps the time of a church service, or whether a church is heated or not or related comfort or accessibility reasons. Sometimes the stance taken on a particular issue may decide someone to choose one church over another. But it is in the main down to relationships that people decide to stay or go. And I don't mean just making friendships. If your parents had a particular love of a place, that love may find its way to you. It is remarkable how many people I've spoken to down the years, who never darken the doors of a particular church but nevertheless consider that church to be "their" church. In the Raleigh Mission Community, we all have our favourite church (Not me, of course – I love you all equally!) but all are open every day and I know would welcome anyone who does cross the threshold. We are a beacon to the community. How we are received is largely beyond our control but if we remain open, welcome and serious about what we are there for – to represent and point people in the direction of God's Grace and peace - God will bless us, and make sure we are there for future generations.

**The Prayer for Today** is an amalgam of two of Anselm's great prayers. His approach is characterised as "faith seeking understanding" rather than needing to understand before one can believe.

**My Prayer is a cold little thing, Lord, because it burns with so faint a flame. But you are rich in mercy. As your kindness is above all human love, so let your eagerness to hear be greater than what I feel when I pray.**

**Lord, I am not trying to reach your height, for my poor mind could not even approach it. But I do want to understand the little of your truth which my heart already believes and loves. I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but I believe so that I may understand; and further, I believe that unless I believe I shall never understand.**

Love and peace,  
Martin