

Dear friends,

The literary festival, for which St. Peter's church is the major venue came to an end on Sunday. There were extremely interesting talks on a far range of subjects and the ones I went to were about the many partitions of India (of which 1947 was just one of them), the character and formation of President Xi of China (a brutal upbringing forming a brutal man), crisis management, music in the movies, and the criminality, derangement, and entitled battiness of Prince Andrew and Fergie (a real eye-opener).

**That last talk** came after our two services in the morning. We had coffee as usual but the festival team were busy re-assembling the backdrop, lighting and video screens of the festival while we quickly drank our coffee.

**This Wednesday** the 24th September at 7pm is our next Joint PCC meeting for everyone that sits on your individual Parochial church councils.

**A school Governor** is urgently required from St. Peter's church to be our link between our church and our school. Anyone interested? If so please see me or Fran and we'll put you in touch with Steve Hitchcock the head teacher. This is a rewarding role that touches a lot of young lives.

**At 3pm** this Sunday afternoon is Budleigh Salterton Civic service in St. Peter's.

**Sunday 28th September – St. Michael and All Angels.**

Colin Randall will preside at both services at St. Peter's on this, his 50th anniversary of his ordination. I will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

**Genesis 28: 10-17.** "Jacob's ladder" has passed into popular usage and indeed is used for the set of steps up the cliff in Sidmouth. It is used today obviously because of the mention of Angels traversing up and down on it. Angels connect earth to heaven and have traditionally been seen as messengers of God. In fact the Hebrew word of an Angel simply means "Messenger". Malachi, the name of the last book of the old testament means Messenger

**Revelation 12: 7-12.** St. Michael is known as the warrior of God, head of the Angels and Archangels. Here he fights Satan (the accuser) and removes him from God's presence so he can no longer have access to God to accuse people of things. The bad news is that the devil and his angels stalk the earth and we see plenty of evidence of them in the world today.

**John 1: 47-51.** According to many scholars, Nathanael (Hebrew – God has given) is the same person as Bartholemew in the synoptic gospels. Nathanael is quick to identify Jesus as the Messiah because of Jesus' insight as to who he was. Jesus assures him that he has much greater surprises in store, as just as in Jacob's ladder he will see angels ascending and descending on the son of man. Angels are seen as being the divine connection between Jesus and his Father.

## Thought for Today

A 2023 poll in the U.S. put belief in Angels as 70% of the population, significantly more than the Devil, or Hell, or reincarnation, or that physical things have spiritual properties. Belief in Angels transcends religious affiliation as well, so Jews, Christians and Muslims all subscribe to the notion of Angels, but remarkably, quite a few non-believers in God also have a belief in Angels. Of course, it is easier to believe in something that makes no demands on you, asks no commitment or standard of ethics. That, I feel may be the main reason of course. You can believe in something spiritual without the annoyance of having any demands on your time, or thoughts or money. I am really struck by the passage in Hebrews (13:2) that encourages hospitality to strangers because in doing so “many have entertained angels unawares.” This conflates a human messenger with a divine messenger and realises that they can be one and the same thing. One thing I do know is that God works through human beings, knowingly or unwittingly, to speak to people. A great example of this is that King Cyrus who signed an edict allowing the exiled Jewish people to return to Israel in 539BC is always regarded as being used by God to do his work even though King Cyrus was a pagan. God can use anyone at any time to deliver messages to certain people. So what about us? We can be used to spread God’s will and his messages to the most unsuspecting people, and we may not be aware of it at all. But we can also do so more consciously by being bringers of light, calm and peace, or a word of God into a situation. Go on – be an Angel.

**The Prayer for Today** As the days get darker and the temperature falls this is a very timely prayer forwarded to me by Margaret Scrivener

### **An Autumn Prayer**

**Loving Father, as the leaves change and the air turns colder, we are reminded of the beauty of transitions.**

**Just as nature sheds the old to make way for the new, may we too release what we no longer need and embrace this season of change with open hearts.**

**Grant us the wisdom to let go of what weighs us down, the gratitude to cherish the moments of warmth and the resilience to weather the storms.**

**May the autumn colours inspire us to find beauty in a world that is always changing and strength in vulnerability.**

**Guide us through this autumn season of transformation with grace and courage, knowing that every falling leaf carries the promise of new growth. Amen**

Love and peace,  
Martin