

Dear friends,

Like almost all retired vicars I've ever come across, the PCC meetings and the Annual general meetings (APCM) are the things they miss least when looking back on stipendiary ministry. Still, all Annual meetings are now over for another year. There were two APCMs on Sunday. However, my mood lightened when it was followed by the "open gardens" in Otterton afterwards so after a Cornish pasty in the village Hall we spent a lovely few hours walking around Otterton and admiring people's gardens and stopping for coffee and cake in a courtyard off the high street. When we got home it wasn't long before we were off to St. Peter's to listen to an organ recital given by our musical director Stephen Tanner which was excellent of course. So the good thing to emerge from that was that at least I had visited all three churches on a Sunday! Hundreds of people were drawn to the open gardens event and St. Michael's church gets a share of the profits and a healthy showing at St. Peter's had a retiring collection that goes towards all the musical endeavours at the church.

The Next Sunday at Six will feature Michael Dutton on the organ and the one after that (8th June) will be our regular Choral Evensong.

Thursday 29th at 7pm will be our Ascension Day Eucharist. I know there is a clash with the "Pudding night" at the public Hall and it also clashes with Louise's birthday. Still, these things are sent to test us once in a while. I will lead intercessions and read all the readings unless anyone tells me they will do it. The readings are the same every year and are Acts 16: 16-34, Ephesians 1: 15 – 23 and Luke 24: 44-53.

Sunday 1st June – 7th of Easter

I will preside at both services at St. Peter's and Jean Burrows will preside at All Saints at 9.30am and Stacey James will preside at St. Michael's at 11am.

Acts 16: 16-34. Two stories of deliverance from bondage – one a girl enslaved by an evil spirit and in the other, Paul is delivered from human bondage. There were two kinds of slave also. The girl was a privately owned slave whose owners exploited her talent for divination, and the jailor, a publicly owned slave who would collect a wage and had a house. The fact that he contemplated suicide when the incident happened is an indication of how fragile his position was. The jailor was not a "God fearer" who had the bridge of Judaism to make the transition to Christianity but made the journey in one leap. His entire household (like Lydias) was baptised which presumably contained children and is a proof text for the mainstream churches baptising infants

Revelation 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20-21. Jesus is returning imminently to save all his believers from the trials to come. This will resonate with many oppressed Christian churches

around the world but how do we in England interpret this imminence 2000 years later? As with all apocalyptic literature John's revelation is not about predicting times and dates but about the certainty of God's purposes being delivered. The Father and Son stand outside of time and history – the beginning and the end – and have a clear overall view of all things.

John 17: 20-26. Although used by the ecumenical movement as its charter the author of John's gospel was operating at a much deeper level than post-reformation institutional unity. In mystical language describes the mystical unity of Father and Son and also the mystical unity of the church with them both. To be "saved" is to be incorporated into the divine life. It is a doctrine to make much of church life slink away ashamed of its triviality.

Thought for Today

My wife, Louise is on the board of trustees of both the Shandford trust (which seeks to use the money from the sale of the Shandford care home for the benefit of the people of Budleigh Salterton and surrounding villages) and Seachange (formerly the Hub). It was an interesting experience on Tuesday morning attending "Digger day" when the work started in building three alms-houses for older people with limited means. This is the first concrete action of the charity and is very exciting. The alms-houses will be conveniently situated next to Seachange which is Budleigh's health and well being hub. There will be affordable rents for those over sixty who do not qualify for social housing and is the first step in providing concrete results for an area of perceived need. Of course, many of the trustees may not be Christian but I see it as "God's work" nevertheless. I don't think many would balk at it being described as "Love in action" and love transcends all boundaries of faith, class, social standing or income. No matter where you are, or think you are, in our society, or what you believe, we can all love and care for each other. We are all bound together through our common humanity. As the victim on the road to Jericho was helped by a Samaritan I wouldn't care, if at my moment of dire need, I was helped by a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or atheist. The fact is, their help was the proof of their being my neighbour. If you want to know more about the work of the trust and whether you'd like to donate to the charity please just google the Shandford trust or Budleigh Almshouses. The Prayer for Today is by someone from a completely different tradition – an Indian 17th century seer and poet called Sant Tukaram.

**Of what avail this restless, hurrying activity,
This heavy weight of earthly duties?
God's purposes stand firm,
And you, his little one,
Need only one thing:
Trust in his power
And he will meet your need.**

**Your burden rests safe on him,
And you his little one,
May play securely at his side.
This is the sum and substance of it all:
God is,
God loves you,
God bears all your care.**

Love and peace,
Martin