

Dear friends,

Christine Channon who has been a valued friend and counsellor during my time here in East Devon finally at the age of eighty laid down her blue scarf upon the altar during choral evensong last night at St. Peter's signifying her retirement from reader ministry. Important to note that Christine is not going anywhere and will still be heavily involved at St. Peter's but just not as a reader. We were enhanced by choir members from Sidmouth so the choir was full to bursting as was as one commentator said afterwards of Cathedral standard.

It was a pleasure, as ever, to preside at All Saints and St. Michael's in the morning and our house and driveway are looking good after all the quinquennial works were done on our vicarage (Yes, it is not just church buildings that have them!) the main difference being that I don't have to pay for them – thank the Lord.

Sunday 17th September – Trinity 15 – Proper 19

I will be presiding at St. Peter's at both morning services and Chris Cant will preside at All Saints and Margaret Scrivener will preside at St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively. We also have Aaran Stanbury, our new CMS Mission partner introducing himself, so there will be a retiring collection for the work of CMS.

Genesis 50: 15-21. Fear of retribution leads Joseph's brothers to try and con Joseph that Jacob had expressly wanted him to forgive them for selling Joseph into slavery. But Joseph notes that while they intended evil, God used the situation for good. This is a story of forgiveness and reconciliation that reveals the true nature of God.

Romans 14: 1-12. The differing beliefs and practices of other Christians can be very annoying! But they are all doing and believing these things in accordance with their own light and our job is not to pass judgement on them. God is the judge, and we are all standing on a level playing field in his eyes. Diversity of faith and belief are admissible in God's eyes according to Paul if arrived at in faith and integrity.

Matthew 18: 21-35. In this parable the "king" is God and he forgives some poor individual and incalculable sum (Ten thousand talents were the day wages of a labourer for 150,000 years!) yet he in turn is unable to forgive even a paltry sum owed to him. That person is each one of us, who find it so

hard to forgive, even though God's grace forgives us an incalculable sum. Forgiveness is not a matter of Justice, it is a matter of God's mercy. The differences between us all is slight compared as seen with God's perspective – we are all forgiven sinners.

Recently I commemorated 20 years of ordination but Canon Mike Williams, knocks that milestone into a cocked hat by celebrating 30 years of ordained ministry. Congratulations Mike and his nearest Sunday to that landmark is on the 1st October which this year is also our Harvest festival. Mike is presiding at St. Peter's that Sunday, and he will be at our Harvest Lunch that day in St. Peter's, for which Louise and I also look forward to joining you.

The Harvest Lunch on the 1st October at St. Peter's at 12.15/12.30 is buffet style and tickets are £10 and a bar will also be available. Tickets available from Christine Channon or Fran.

Home Group taster session on Thursday 21st September from 3pm – 4.30pm at Margaret and Peter Revell's house - no.7, Exmouth road, Budleigh Salterton. Enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and biscuits when locations and times and frequencies will be discussed. All welcome – they will be ecumenical and will be using the book called "visions of Grace" by William Sykes, former chaplain of University college Oxford.

Thought for the day.

Contemplating the gospel parable set for today opened my eyes to a fundamental truth that we know full well that we are supposed to forgive people – it is ingrained in us, not least in the Lord's prayer and passages such as the one from Matthew 18. Yet congregations are full of people who know they should forgive and intellectually recognise that there would be positive value to letting go of long held hurts, yet find it nigh on impossible to do so. Being cheated on or swindles can leave us feeling full of shame and rage and leave us feeling devalued and defeated. Knowing that we "ought" to forgive in these circumstances doesn't change anything but merely adds guilt into the equation. What such a parable engenders is the fact that forgiveness is not a numbers game – forgiveness cannot be quantified. Any genuine human forgiveness is rooted in divine forgiveness. When we look again at the parable there is a huge missing link. After being forgiven "Ten thousand talents" there is no appropriate response, no rejoicing, no gratitude or celebrating with his family. Isn't that a bit odd? He was forgiven yet he hasn't "received" or appreciated forgiveness. He is of course deluded

because he imagines that he is dealing with God on a quid pro quo basis and says he will pay back everything he owes but there is absolutely no way he can do that. He hasn't been able to see himself as truly "gifted" person so is unable to see his debtor in the same light. This parable demonstrates the extreme kindness of God, who surprises people by dealing with them not on the basis of justice but by showing mercy. It invites all Christian people to see themselves as forgiven sinners – no more no less.

The Prayer for Today was found written on a piece of wrapping paper near the body of a dead child in Ravensbruck where 92,000 women and children died in 1945.

**O Lord,
Remember not only the men and women of goodwill,
But also those of ill will.
But do not only remember the suffering they have inflicted on us,
Remember the fruits we bought thanks to this suffering,
Our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, the courage, the generosity,
The greatness of heart that has grown out of all this.
And when they come to judgement
Let all the fruits that we have borne
Be their forgiveness. AMEN.AMEN.AMEN**

Love and peace,
Martin