

## Weekly Newsletter (63)

by and for the Christ Church and Pagham URC families

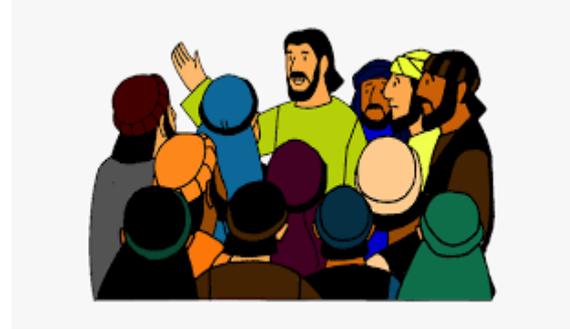
16<sup>th</sup> May 2021

### Musings from the Manse

Dear Friends,

Here we are at the seventh Sunday of Easter, the week before Pentecost and the birth of the church. The disciples wait ... Judas is gone ... a replacement must be found ... and, as Peter talks with the believers, their world, (and in turn, ours), begins to change.

Sheila Walker's *'Contemporary Reflection'* on the reading from Acts helps us to ponder on the task that was ahead of the believers and is still one we are called to today. It's called *'Tell and Kiss'* ...



'They'd seen it all, the twelve, right from the start; boy! they could tell you a thing or two, from that first call on the shores of Galilee through those three unimaginable years walking with Jesus through crowds and solitude, feasting and fasting, winning hearts and arguments, multiplying food and enemies, healing the sick and sickening the doctors of law – and so much more.

And they were swept along, the twelve, unsettled and amazed, exhausted and elated. *'Follow me ...'* (Just as well they never had a job description; in the small print would have been: *'and anything else your line manager may reasonably [or unreasonably] ask you to do ...'*)

They'd seen it – those who hadn't fled – and could tell you how it all ended in tears with those last hours of Calvary ... devastated twelve became eleven.

Kiss-and-tell Judas; if only you had hung on to see him - not dead but risen! For, if Christ is not risen, our faith is in vain; if the cross is 'the still point in a turning world', then the resurrection is the great shout that this is indeed so. Thank God for the empty tomb, which the Romans could not explain; for the hundreds who saw him again, with their own eyes; for the transformation of the team. Thank God that his testimony, his witness to himself – *'This is my beloved Son'* – is written in human history and will stand in any court of law - (should we have the arrogance to try it) - with so many eye-witnesses it is hard, after all, to deny it ...

Twelve apostles for twelve tribes and so Matthias, called to be the new recruit, must have been **there** and seen; one more who can't deny the evidence of his own eyes, even when – or perhaps because – it will mean martyrdom ... and all this so that we, not having seen, may yet believe, be blessed, make his history ours and testify, **tell**, that Jesus **is** the Son of God.

Tell it from history, or from experience? We, who are well fed, clothed and sheltered, have become such seekers after (suckers for?) experience, sensation ... living for the next cool moment: try a different drug, philosophy, Greek island, wife ... No need to come to a conclusion - to travel **is** to arrive, the journey **is** the destination ... *'I'll choose what works for me today and if tomorrow it seems stale, why, I'll move on ...'*

So, if we are to serve the purposes of God in such a generation, must we not talk the language of experience?

*'I know that Jesus lives because I talked to him this morning ... because he leads me through the day, strengthens my will, restores my peace, forgives me, takes the guilt away; how is it for me? Jesus makes me feel good – no hallucination, no bad trips. Jesus is special, makes me feel special, and he can do it for you ...'*

Yes! Tell it, tell it often, about Christ and you, Christ in you, the hope of glory. Let them see Christ is the explanation of what you are, the inspiration of what you would be; give him the glory! The saints in Revelation overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.

At the same time, beware ... those early heretics, who pleaded that some **particular** experience was needed if we are truly to know God; remember, whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish but have eternal life - (not whoever has a good feeling, a warm glow, a sense of his presence and love – though these things should surely follow).

Tell, but tell and kiss (keep it simple, stupid ...) Faith must be grounded, in fact, before it can fly. *'Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again! And we are all, somehow, caught up in this mystery.'*

And so, we see the disciples preparing, and being prepared, to declare the living, the dying, the rising, the coming of Christ: true, whether or not I make this truth my own; true, as the sea is there, whether or not I swim in it; true, for all time, because it **happened**. An event to be reckoned with - not a theory to be debated. The saints in Revelation overcame **by the blood of the Lamb** and the word of their testimony.

Even this generation, who swear there is no absolute truth, agree the world was changed by 9/11; what, then, of AD?' *(‘Contemporary Reflections for Praying and Preaching’ – Sheila Walker)*

Friends, what we believe, and what we say to those who do not yet believe, is driven by events that we have testimony for – **we** don’t have to ‘prove’ it! When Christ lives in us, and we declare it by the way we live, we will be a living testimony that continues to change the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ, Helen <><

## Word for today John 17: 6-19

‘Now they know that everything you have given me is from you: for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.’ *(John 17: 7.8.13)*

## Meditation of the apostles

What did he come to give us?

**Light**, say some, and they’re right enough; for he’s shone in the darkness of this world - bringing good out of evil, right out of wrong – a new dawn for all.

**Grace**, say others, and they have a point; for, undeserving though we are, unworthy of his blessing, he pours out his mercy, time and again.

I’d go for **truth**; for he’s shown us the way, the answer to our deepest needs – God’s word made flesh, setting us free.

**Peace** would be my choice - an inner tranquillity of spirit, unlike anything this world can give, passing understanding.

I’d opt for **life** - resurrection life – lived, not just now, in all its fullness, but with him for evermore?

Ah, but what about **love**? Isn’t that the key to it all – the meaning of the Law and prophets, heart of the gospel, and essence of God?

No question of that, no question of any, but one thing joints them all. ‘*I speak these things in the world*’, he said, ‘*so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.*’

That’s what he gives; that’s what sums up everything he’s done: an inner happiness that no one can take away – his joy complete in our hearts.

## Prayer

Living God,

we have so much to celebrate, so many reasons to give thanks,  
for you have richly blessed us, showering us with good things.

Yet do our lives radiate the joy of Christ?

We speak of it, sing of it,  
but would anyone around us take note of a happiness that sets us apart?

Help us truly to appreciate all you have done and given,  
so that the joy we proclaim may unmistakably shine from us.

Teach us to exult in your unfailing love and mercy,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*Word for today, Meditation and Prayer from ‘A most amazing Man’ by Nick Fawcett*

## Gathered for Prayer....

Meets at **9 am and 7 pm each Wednesday. All are welcome!**

Here's the link....

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5742722693?pwd=R3BEQ3pPV0ZJNndRWWVKeWdvand6QT09>

Meeting ID: 574 272 2693 Passcode: xsX5UM



Whilst the envelopes have been taken out, but not been able to be gathered in, for this year's Christian Aid Collection, there is still time to donate! If you have an envelope, and you've not had the opportunity to give it back or donate in another form, there will be a collection plate in the lounge of Christ Church, **at the services on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May**, for you to do just this. Thank you.  
*Derek Wales and Terry Timblick*

## Thanksgiving Service for Anne Wales – (a letter from Derek and a date for your diary)

Dear Friends

We are writing to everyone who was kind enough to contact us after Anne died in February of last year. We have had to wait until the lifting of the pandemic restrictions but we are now planning a Thanksgiving Service. It will be on **Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> September at 2 pm at St Paul's Church, Chichester, PO19 6FT**, and we hope that some of you will wish to join us then. We recognise that it will not be for everybody but, if you are not able to be with us, we hope that you may be able to think of us and remember Anne - particularly on that day.

We expect to prepare a leaflet for the service with a number of photographs and we would be very glad to send a copy of that to anyone who cannot be with us but would like to see it. If you would, please let Derek know, indicating whether you would like us to send it by e-mail or by post.

For those who wish to come we look forward to seeing you. It would be helpful if you could let us know beforehand, though we will still warmly welcome you if, for any reason, you are not able to do that.

We would also like to invite you to join us after the service for a reception with light refreshments, though we are not yet able to say where we will gather. We hope that our venue will be the Brasserie Restaurant of the Chichester Festival Theatre, as we originally planned. But, if not, we will be able to meet in the Parish Room of the Church, where the facilities have recently been refurbished and extended.

There will be no formal address at that gathering but this may present an opportunity for some of you to make your own contribution to the event - perhaps by adding to a display illustrating some particular aspect of Anne's life. So we invite you, if you wish, to send us something in advance - reasonably small – perhaps a few words of appreciation that could be printed out, a short anecdote or phrase relating to Anne, a photo, or even a sketch for the more artistically driven. Andrew would be happy to receive any contributions by e-mail to prepare for display.

Parking is available at the Northgate Car Park, from which both the Church and the Theatre can be seen - a short level distance away.

We greatly look forward to seeing some of you and trust that no unexpected pandemic restrictions will, once again, disrupt our plans.

Kind regards, *Derek Wales, Nicola and David, Andrew and Cathy, Stuart and Mia*

*(NB Please contact Derek regarding the 11<sup>th</sup> September and for Andrew's email for any contributions – Helen)*

## Booking is now open for June services: all begin at 10:30 am

To book a place please email [chichristchurch@gmail.com](mailto:chichristchurch@gmail.com) (or reply to this email) or leave a message on **01243 531594**. The deadline is **6 pm the previous Sunday**. Confirmation will be emailed by the following Wednesday evening.

6 June Holy Communion - Rev Helen

20 June

Family Worship – Rev Helen

13 June Family Worship – Jack Delbridge

27 June

Family Worship – Rev Helen