



WELCOME TO ST ANDREW'S STEWTON CHURCH COMMUNITY – POST 76

Today we give thanks for the privilege of learning more and more about the God who creates us, redeems us, teaches and sustains us every day.

The focus of today's Post is TRUST.

Who do we trust as we push off into the immediate future having had a strong dose of realism about how frail and vulnerable human beings really are, not to mention the frailty of the environment of which we are a very small part? This also applies to our life as a Christian Community both locally and nationally. How we take the next steps into the future is crucial to the kind of world and church we become.

To love God and to love our neighbour are guiding principles of our faith. We ask forgiveness for those times when we have lost sight of them.

When we think we know it all and need not ask God's help.

Lord, have mercy.

When we think our way is best, even if it causes pain to someone else.

Christ, have mercy.

When we think others must be wrong and fail to consider alternatives.

Lord, have mercy.

The Scripture readings set for today:

Exodus 16:2-4. 9-15

Having questioned God's purpose (why lead them from Egypt to starve in the wilderness?) the Israelites at first don't recognise the "bread" sent from heaven. They ask "**Manna?**" **What is it?**"

Ephesians 4:1-16

Recognising that we each have gifts given by the one God, we see why as Christians we should work lovingly together, whoever we are, whatever our gifts and strengths or weaknesses, working together as Christ's body.

John 6:24-35

Faced with questions from the crowds, who have yet to recognise him fully, Jesus seeks to explain who he is and why he has come.

The Reflection for today:

“What must we do to perform the works of God?” “Believe on him whom he has sent.”

(John 6:28-29)

‘Have you been vaccinated? If not, why not?’ That is the question currently dividing society, communities, and families across the globe. The shape of so much in the future seems dependent on the answer. Trust is an issue. Can I trust the vaccine? Can I trust the science? Can I trust the politicians? These are very real issues, deeply and passionately held. The future wellbeing and cohesion of society hangs on the way we deal with it.

Trust generally is at a low ebb across many aspects of human life, be it politics, science, commerce, banking, the internet, even the church. The misdemeanours and failures of a few undermine the whole fabric of institutions, communities and society, including the church. How to rebuild that trust needs to be at the very heart of how we approach the future, how we approach being a Christian community for all, in the years to come.

At the end of Rudyard Kipling’s Just So Story “The Elephant’s Child”, we find these lines:

‘I Keep six honest serving-men:
(They taught me all I knew)
Their names are What and Where and When
And How and Why and Who’.

These questions are basic for any good detective or journalist but serve us well as Christians too, particularly as we seek more fully to understand and draw closer to God and communicate our faith as a reasonable basis upon which to live all human lives. Throughout what we call salvation history, the Bible, people have asked questions of God, and about God, even if answers are not always as forthcoming in quite the way we expect.

Kipling’s six “serving-men” are vividly on duty in today’s Gospel passage. It opens with people looking for Jesus – asking *where* he is. When they finally spot him, although they ask *when* he got there, what they really mean is *how*? A few verses earlier Jesus walked across the water to join his disciples in the boat. The crowd saw the boat depart without him. They board another vessel and, lo and behold, Jesus is already there on the other side! They can’t understand how he managed to get across the lake before them. They are faced with a mystery. *Who* is this? Jesus gives them a clue in his words about the ‘food that endures for eternal life’, with loud hints that he is the Son of Man, on whom God the Father has set his seal, and that they should believe in him, learn from him, follow him and they will knowingly come close to God. But it all falls on deaf ears. They demand a sign, ‘works’, to help them believe. They appeal to their ancestral history, to Moses, (our first reading today) and recalling the miraculous food given to the Israelites in the wilderness they use the word “manna”, which means “*What is it?*” They interpret it as verification of Moses’ credentials rather than an opportunity to draw close to God from whom comes our ‘daily bread’ – all things necessary for life.

Still trying to explain who he is and why he has come, Jesus perseveres with the bread image, referring to himself as the bread of life, eternal life, an image he uses frequently, not least at the Last Supper we remember at every Eucharist. ‘*Who can receive this?*’ Anyone, says Jesus, who comes to him, anyone who believes in him – whoever they are.

Sadly for many in the crowd that day, it was just too good to trust and believe as it still is for so many today. How can this man confidently offer eternal life and somehow claim the power of God over life and death? It would take the death and resurrection of Jesus to answer their questions that Jesus was, and is, the who, what, when, where, how and why of God. There’s absolutely nothing wrong with questions. How else do we learn? So can we apply Kipling’s questions to our own life of faith? Who do we think Jesus is? Where should we look for him? ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’

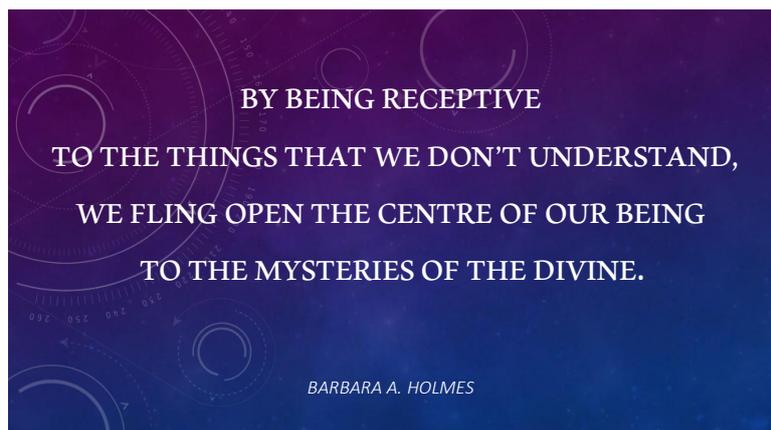
What helps us to believe? Why should we? What has this strange time of pandemic taught us about God and Jesus ,our faith, and who we are? Are we left with more questions than answers?

Questions are for **asking**, to avoid confusion, hopelessness and depression. Jonathan Van Tam is particularly good at dealing with questions and helping those sceptical of vaccination to see things more clearly. Our second reading today clearly states *'We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.'* To enable this to happen to us as a church community I strongly believe we need the opportunity at some point soon to come together and debrief – share our feelings, our questions our doubts, fears and hopes for the future, speaking the truth in love. If we fail to do this we risk going off into the future ignoring the opportunity we have been given to bring something good out of what otherwise might well be a disaster, and how we might more effectively 'perform the works of God.'
Continue well. Continue safely. Let us build a better future together.

Alan

*I Keep six honest serving-men:
(They taught me all I knew)
Their names are What and Where and When
And How and Why and Who.
I send them over land and sea,
I send them east and west;
But after they have worked for me,
I give them all a rest.*

*I let them rest from nine till five.
For I am busy then,
As well as breakfast, lunch, and tea,
For they are hungry men:
But different folk have different views:
I know a person small—
She keeps ten million serving-men,
Who get no rest at all!
She sends 'em abroad on her own affairs,
from the second she opens her eyes—
One million Hows, two million Wheres,
And seven million Whys!*





As Jesus heard the questions from the crowd and sought to answer their concerns, we know that God is listening now as we pray.

We pray for the Church, that all Christian leaders may serve God in honesty and truth.

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer today we remember our brothers and sisters in the Church of the Province of South East Asia

We pray for the world, that all governments and rulers may remember their duty to serve those entrusted to their care.

We pray for all who suffer, in body, mind or spirit, and for all who serve and tend to those in need.

In our own Team Parish we are asked to pray for: *Marguerite Baillie, Peggy Baillie, Anne-Marie Bidwell, Ed Cox, Rev Moira Davies, Hildegard Dettmer-Becroft, Rosemary Huke, Fr James Drayton, Oscar Gabryel, Bob Lewis, Anna Mamwell, Mary Oxley, Alan Pounds, Sylvia Pounds, Andrea Prior, Betty Robinson, Eileen Robinson, Dorothy Scammell, Enid Spicer, Joyce Terrett, John Troughton, Pauline Watson, Stuart Watson.*

We pray for ourselves, and each other, that as honest servants of Christ we may seek to follow his example in all our dealings with others.

We remember those who have served on this earth and are now at rest in the eternal kingdom especially those who have recently died: *Jennifer Brindle, Muriel Tacey, Bryan Clark, Doreen Woodward, Ralph Snowden, Clive Beecham, Roger Taylor, Marjorie Speed.*

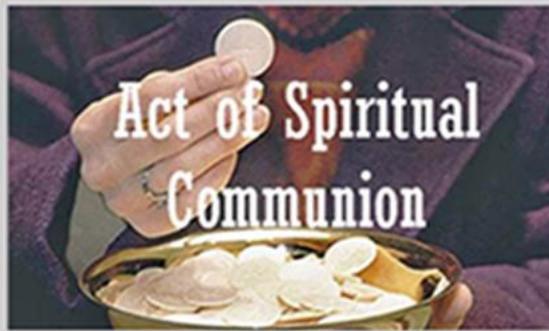
Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for the answers you have already given us, and for hearing the prayers we bring before you today. In the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Almighty God,
who sent your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of your Church:
open our hearts to the riches of your grace,
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Gracious Father,
revive your Church in our day,
and make her holy, strong and faithful,
for your glory's sake
in Jesus Christ our Lord.



May we grow in the grace of God as we learn from the Lord of life.
May we serve God with mature confidence and praise God with childlike joy.
May we know the blessing of God, always with us
as we grow in likeness of the one whom he has sent.



Lord Jesus, you are the Bread of Life,
may we always hunger for your word,
for your presence in our lives,
for the peace you alone can give,
and for the courage and confidence you inspire
without which in these times
we cannot live as your disciples in the world.
May we never forget you,
never walk away from you,
but always trust in you and remain close by you,
and may we be united with you for ever. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy
Spirit as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be for
ever. Amen.

Readings for next Sunday

August 8th 2021

10th Sunday after TRINITY

1 Kings 19:4-8

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

John 6:35, 41-51





August has arrived and harvest is imminent, it seems hardly possible, where do the months go? The weather becomes more and more unpredictable and listening to the news around the world brings more and more concerns. However we continue on with whatever comes our way. We will hopefully be into the rape by the end of next week, and the wheat continues to ripen. Linseed is now out of flower so will hopefully be not too far behind wheat.

We have now got all the headlands mowed ready to get into crops, and when I was field walking the other day I have never seen so many butterflies, the air was full of them, a beautiful sight . My pictures show the ripening wheat, and the sky this evening, which looks very stormy.

Let's hope we do not have too much rain, as that will stop the action.

Jane x





From the Rev Ian Chisholm...



As you probably know I loved last weekend's cartoon where the disciples were in the boat with Jesus. One of them was standing and playing his castanets having misheard Jesus say "cast the nets" into the lake. It really did make me laugh. But I suspect like most we haven't had much to laugh about recently. Such horrendous things are happening in so many parts of the world. Not only the virus but starvation - floods - violence and so I could go on. In the midst of it all we keep on saying "how fortunate we are".

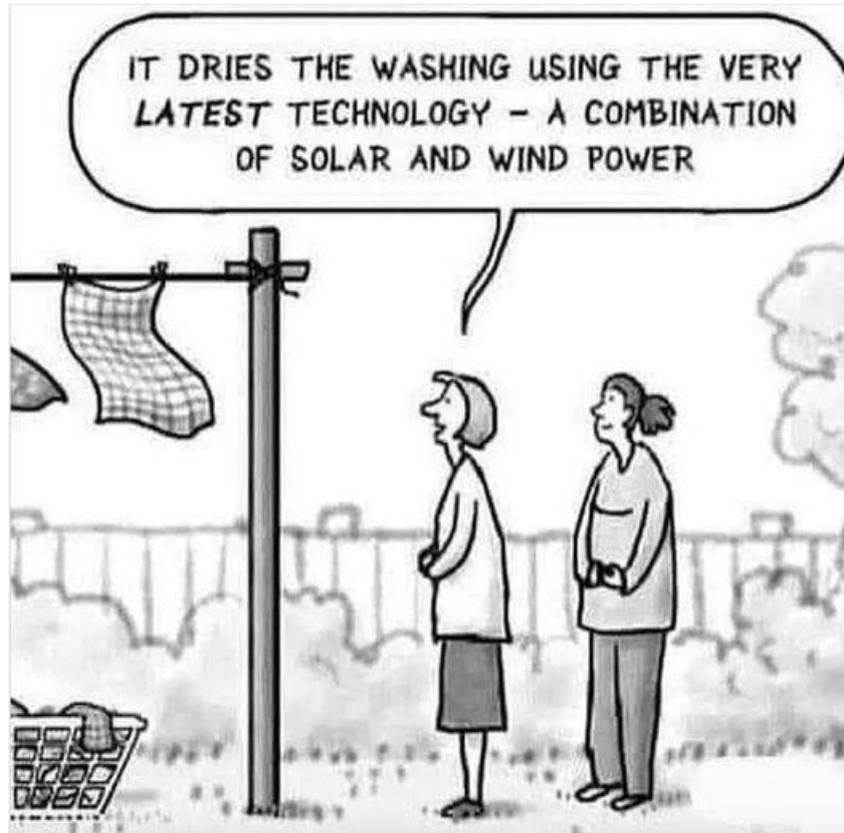
I need to get out, for I'm not a great reader, though I do enjoy Donna Leon's detective stories set in Venice and I don't have many hobbies but we have a full plot allotment which has been a real life saver in getting me out day after day.

The broad beans, raspberries and courgettes are all just about finished though we have quite a bit of other produce yet to come. Of course it hasn't appeared by magic. There has been plenty of digging, lots of watering not to mention weeding. But the results are amazing. What about God's Kingdom and church growth? It is not just going to happen. It depends on each one of us getting stuck in and using the gift God has given us, however small and insignificant it might seem, in order that He might produce a harvest of people.

Take care.

Ian





IN A PERFECT WORLD...

