



March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

Welcome

15th Sunday after Trinity ~ 12th September 2021

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

We are keeping services much the same; staying away if ill, wearing masks, washing hands and respecting distance. We have congregational singing for those wearing masks. We continue to keep people safe and to feel safe.

~ Services with Social Distancing ~

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."

Prayers

Almighty God, to whose glory we celebrate the foundation of this house of prayer: we praise you for the many blessings you have given to those who worship you here: and we pray that all who seek you in this place may find you, and, being filled with the Holy Spirit, may become a living temple acceptable to you: through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Merciful Lord, cast your bright beams of light upon the Church: that, being enlightened by the teaching of your blessed apostle and evangelist Saint John, we may so walk in the light of your truth that we may at last attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, your incarnate Son, the Word made flesh.. Amen

Psalm 122

I was glad when they said unto me: We will go into the house of the Lord.

Our feet shall stand in thy gates: O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is built as a city: that is at unity in itself.

For thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord:

to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the Name of the Lord.

For there is the seat of judgement: even the seat of the house of David.

O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

Peace be within thy walls: and plenteousness within thy palaces.

For my brethren and companions' sake: I will wish thee prosperity.

Yea, because of the house of the Lord our God: I will seek to do thee good.

1 We love the place, O God,
wherein thine honour dwells;
the joy of thine abode
all earthly joy excels.

2 We love the house of prayer,
wherein thy servants meet;
and thou, O Lord, art there
thy chosen flock to greet.

3 We love the sacred font;
for there the holy Dove
to pour is ever wont
his blessing from above.

4 We love thine altar, Lord;
O what on earth so dear?
for there, in faith adored,
we find thy presence near.

5 We love the word of life,
the word that tells of peace,
of comfort in the strife,
and joys that never cease.

6 We love to sing below
for mercies freely given;
but O we long to know
the triumph-song of heaven.

7 Lord Jesus, give us grace
on earth to love thee more,
in heaven to see thy face,
and with thy saints adore.

Meditation

150 years ago, on 13th September 1871, the Bishop of Ely passed through March and laid the foundation stone for St John's Church. They processed from the neighbouring cemetery chapel to the site, chanting the above Psalm 122, then singing the above hymn "We love this place, O God" then the stone was laid. It was not without controversy, as it seems that the ordinary people did not know this was to occur, only being informed by handbills and the Town Crier earlier in the day, yet dignitaries had managed to travel some distance, as they had advance notice – it provoked letters to the paper!

Doddington was the largest parish geographically in the whole of the County, and also one of the richest. Until well into the 20th century each parish was endowed separately leading to widely different sized stipends, and Doddington's was huge, so huge that it caused scandal. The longstanding Rector of Doddington was sitting with this money, and his large parish was being poorly served, and he was resistant to persuasion. So in the end they had to pass Acts of Parliament to change the situation here.

The first in 1847 provided for the construction of a church at Benwick (sadly this was not on firm foundations and was demolished in 1983) and for the former pilgrimage church of St Wendreda to become a parish church. They then reconstructed the altar end of this church (chancel) in 1874. A second Act was passed in 1856 which provided for three more churches for March and one for Wimblington. However the money did not become available until the death of the Rector in 1868, hence the delay in the founding of St John's, the first of the new churches in March. Amazingly, considering how long it takes building projects today, with all the sophisticated machinery, it took less than a year to complete, so we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its consecration next summer. The architect and builders went on to construct in succession in different styles, the other churches provided for, St Mary's, Wimblington and lastly, St Peter's. A final church; St Mary Magdalene West Fen (on a bend on the road to Turves) was built later, but was demolished around 1970.

The medieval St Wendreda's, originally built as shrine to a royal princess, virgin and nun, had become a staging post for pilgrims on the greater routes to Ely or Walsingham, had had Guilds dedicated to Holy Trinity, St Anne (mother of Mary), and St Mary, St Peter and St John the Baptist. This simply explains the dedications of the other two churches, but I suspect the switch from the Baptist to the Evangelist was not through ignorance or accident. For March in 1871 already had three Baptist Chapels of different flavours, (Strict, Particular, General) as well as a several Methodist, Congregational and Independent Chapels. Indeed, the creation of these four new parishes for March was response to losing ground by the Church of England; St John's being placed next to the Civil graveyard that was at least, in part, to allow non-conformist burials away from the churchyard at St W; and even more so with St Peter, which was built next to a row of chapels and on a scale to loom over them.

Despite agricultural cycles of boom and bust, March was a growing town; the coming of the railways ensured this; and as it had direct railway routes to the other towns in the Isle, Wisbech, Ely, Chatteris and Whittlesey it became the County town. St John's was built near the railway, St Mary's for land workers, and St Peter's to reclaim the centre of town, with St Wendreda's to serve the older population centre.

Well, I hope that gives you a flavour of why these things happened back then, and actually how it compares with what is happening in the world around us today, which will drive our future.

Then, the Church felt it was losing out to Chapels, now we are very aware of people who profess no faith, speak in terms of spirituality, or express their relationship to God in very different ways. The answer then seemed to be about impressing people, but also making churches available nearer to where people lived. Now how do we make our faith more accessible to people with different lifestyles, questions, outlooks, habits and routines?

Then, technology was transforming agriculture, transport and industry. Then the church was involved in creating schools, hospitals, almshouses and moving toward tiers of government that was both local and accountable. Now, post covid, we are facing more home working, difficulty in getting workers in transport, packing and in the care sector. How can we develop ways of working that both provide their services and products more effectively, and in ways that value the workforce and enable them to live balanced lives with wellbeing? How do we make sure that decisions about public services, what and how and where, are local and accountable? And what about sustainability, pollution and use of energy?

Then, it took Acts of Parliament to allow the church to restructure and to become a better servant. Now, we have already needed Parliament to correct us on safeguarding and equalities, and there is more to do. Now there seem to be some who think the way forward is to move from a parish system that seeks to serve all, into a more gathered model. Is this what Jesus would have us do?

Then, to meet growing population by birth, better health, and migration more resources came to March. Now, how do we meet the needs of areas that have greater population growth than us, worse health care, and have a greater awareness of being part of a global world?

But to end with, back to our hymn and psalm. We love our buildings because they speak of the presence of God in ordinary and special moments, and of his love, care, concern, and inspiration for all people. And like the psalmist, we rejoice when people of different shapes and sizes, cultures and cooking, beliefs and outlook, gather in peace and unity, whether in person, or on-line, in spirit or in human purpose, in the Name of God. Amen.

God bless, Andrew

Prayers

Rejoicing in the love and life of God made visible among us, let us
pray to Jesus, the only begotten Son.

Bread of life, your beloved disciple John has brought us your living
word, inspire all evangelists and teachers to build up your Church.
Light of the world, illuminate the dark places of this world, where sin,
violence and death cast their shadow over human lives.

Door of the sheepfold, protect all who are in trouble or danger, and
give grace to our loved ones, families and friends.

Way, truth and life, minister to all who are lost, misguided or without
faith; bind up the broken and give rest to the weary.

Resurrection and the life, raise us up at the last day with all who have
gone before us in faith, with those whom we see no longer, with John
and all your saints, that in your father's house we may come to the
place you have prepared for us. Incarnate Lord, Word made flesh, ac-
cept our prayers.

The risen Christ is here in the midst of us.

We bring our prayers to him as Lord of the Church.

For the Church universal, of which our buildings are a visible symbol,
Lord receive our thanks and prayer.

For our congregations as we remember your promise that when two or three are gathered in your name you are in the midst of them.

Lord receive our thanks and prayer.

For our homes that we may be still and know that you are God and the fulfilling of our desires and petitions as you see best for us;

Lord receive our thanks and prayer.

For the pardon of our sins when we fall short of your glory,
for your blessings in the past and for a vision for the future.

Lord receive our thanks and prayer.

For the gift of the Holy Spirit and new life in baptism,
for the foretaste of your eternal kingdom in the sacrament of communion

Lord receive our thanks and prayer.

For the blessing of our vows and the crowning of our years with your goodness. For those who come in times of joy or times of sorrow, those who have much to look back on, and those who have much to look forward to.

Lord receive our thanks and prayer.

For the faith of those who have gone before us and for grace to persevere like them; for the benefactors of our churches and all who have died in the peace of Christ and are at rest.

Lord receive our thanks and prayer.

O God, from living stones you prepare an everlasting dwelling place for your majesty. Grant that by the power of the Holy Spirit those who serve you may always be kept in your presence and we may have a sense of fellowship with Saints John, Mary, Peter and Wendreda.

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen