

A Message from The Dean: Backnang Anniversary

Had times been normal I would have been in our twin town of Backnang near Stuttgart in southern Germany, gathering there with others from Chelmsford to celebrate 30 years of working together.

In recent years this important relationship has received new impetus and energy, not least from David Whitehead, who grew up in Chelmsford and has lived in Backnang for many years, and indeed has recently taken German citizenship. It was David who really saw the potential of the church relationships and it has been a pleasure to see those relationships grown between Chelmsford Cathedral and both the Lutheran and Catholic churches in Backnang.

A delegation from Backnang make a special appearance once a year when they bring over German produce for our Christmas Market in the Cathedral. Indeed a few years ago we made the local newspapers in Backnang when they discovered that we had our Christmas Market *inside* the Cathedral rather than outside. It was made very clear to me that such a thing would be unthinkable in Backnang – though it was also clear that many longed for it to happen. And when I first preached in the Stiftskirche, the town church in Backnang, the Mayor commented that it was not normal for the congregation to laugh during the sermon! Again, many clearly wanted that to change.

So, the churches have a role, but this is about two whole communities seeking to share their gifts – and not just at Christmas markets. David Whitehead and I have both said publicly that the links between our communities are even more important after Brexit, and indeed that invites us to strengthen what we do together, how we appreciate one another's cultures and how we continue to go on learning that difference is a gift.



Contact Us:

Cathedral Office, 53 New Street, Chelmsford CMI ITY. Tel: 01245 294492

Website: chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk FaceBook: @chelmsfordcathedral Twitter: @CCathedral

Daily Gospel Readings for this week, to use in your daily prayer:

Monday: Matthew 16. 13-19

Tuesday: Matthew 8. 23-27

Wednesday: Matthew 8. 28 - end

Thursday: Matthew 9. 1-8

Friday: John 20. 24 - 29

Saturday: Matthew 9. 14 - 17

An update from the Dean on Reopening:

Today the government has announced that that church buildings can reopen for public worship from 4th July. We were already planning for the opening of the Cathedral for personal prayer and reflection on this day and are delighted with this further news. Many restrictions will remain in place, including social distancing and a cap on the number of people who can gather for worship at any one time. We are therefore making detailed plans based on the guidance from the government and from the Church of England.

The Bishop of London has been leading the discussions with the Government and she helpfully writes: "We will not be returning to normality overnight - this is the next step on a journey. We've been planning carefully, making detailed advice available There will still be restrictions and we must all still do everything we can to limit the spread of the virus to protect each other, especially the most vulnerable."

I recognise that the last three months here at Chelmsford Cathedral have been challenging in many ways, and that we are in no sense "back to normal" as either a country or as churches. But we have learned many things over this time. As we go forward, much of what we have learnt will have a lasting impact on how we worship together, how we pray, together, how we learn together, and indeed on the new connections we have made with communities across the Diocese and beyond. We are seeking to publish detailed information about opening the Cathedral for worship on Tuesday, 30th June – please check the Cathedral website for the latest information.

With my thanks and best wishes as we look forward to the next steps.

The Very Revd Nicholas Henshall 23rd June 2020



Pray with Us:

Please pray for the work of the Friends of Essex Churches Trust, and give thanks for those who work so hard to preserve our ancient buildings.

Please pray for The Church of The Blessed Sacrament, Melbourne

PRAY for the United Church of North India, The Most Revd Dr Prem Chand Singh, Moderator & Bishop of Jabalpur

Pray for those who are unwell: Jim, Brenda and Chris Cole, Jean Cooper, Rita James, Winnie Towers, Jill Withams and all those in need of our prayers.

Study with Us:

Study Notes on the Sunday Gospel: 28th June 2020

Celebration of Peter the Apostle, one of the Cathedral's patron saints.

Today's readings:

Acts 12.1-11

Ps 125

Matthew 16.13-19



Brief notes on the Bible readings follow at the end, but here first we reflect on the character of Peter and what that has to say about how we follow Jesus today.

In the Roman Catholic church there is an ancient tradition that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and hence the first Pope. There is absolutely no evidence for this claim, but in many ways it would be great if it was true – precisely because Peter the Apostle is a fantastic example of really poor leadership, of just how badly you can get it wrong, even when you've met Jesus face to face.

Whenever Peter opens his mouth, he puts his foot in it. He tries to walk on water but panics and sinks. In today's Gospel Peter makes the first ever profession of faith: "Jesus is Lord", Jesus is the longed-for Messiah. But then – verses tactfully omitted from today's reading – Peter goes so spectacularly off message that Jesus ends up calling him Satan! At the last supper Peter proudly refuses to let Jesus wash his feet; and then, when Jesus explains what he is doing, Peter demands to be washed all over.

Then the big one: Peter betrays Jesus just after he has been warned that he *will* betray Jesus and having sworn that he won't. The line that follows this in Luke 22.61 is devastating: "Jesus looked at Peter." Peter's response – to go out and weep bitterly – is ultimately about his renewal and rescue, but to what extraordinary depths he has sunk, lower even than Judas.

If Peter is the rock on which the Church is built, as this morning's Gospel tells us, what a mess. What a fissured and friable rock it is! Why did Jesus not choose James and John, the Sons of Thunder, with all their energy; or Judas Iscariot, for his financial acumen; or John, because he was loved the best. Jesus makes it worse by giving Peter a deeply ironic name, "Mr Rock" for the least rock-like Apostle among the Twelve.

The Bible and Christian tradition have always known that we are all very vulnerable; often quite helpless at choosing the right thing and rejecting the wrong. We are easily led into temptation and (very like Peter) find it so easy to justify ourselves.

But the Gospel accounts of Peter end somewhere quite beautiful in John 21. This chapter is an addition to the original Gospel, added because the penny hadn't dropped even after the resurrection. Peter – the rock, the prince of the Apostles – has gone back to fishing, hoping he can forget about the last three years.

Jesus is waiting on the beach. This is the last time they will meet face to face. What is Peter expecting? Rebuke, probably; anger. But Jesus refuses to judge Peter and simply asks him three times "do you love me?" Love trumps denial, calls Peter out of his prison, releases him, rescues him, renews his love in return. Healing, forgiveness and the promise of a future. In the great words of one of the greatest hymns: "Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven". That is God's promise to Peter. That is God's promise to us.

This week spend some time on the beach with Jesus. Sit with him and look over your life. Look Jesus in the face and hear him ask you "Do you love me?" And however tentative, however searching, and whatever the cost, like Peter, dare to say yes.



The Cathedral has been **live streaming services** now for three months and many other resources too have moved on-line. As lockdown restrictions ease, we would like to know what you enjoy, what you want more of and how we can do what we currently do, better. Could you help us by answering ten questions so we can plan the way forward for our digital Cathedral? There are links to complete a short survey on our Face Book page, on the Church at Home page of the Cathedral website, or by following this link. <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QNHM8MT> It will take less than five minutes and will really help us to shape our future mission. Many thanks.

Greening the Church Online Conference- The Cathedral and Diocese's **first ever online conference** had c.300 people join us for learning during the day. All the content from the day is available on our You Tube Channel, from the opening worship with Canon Imogen to presentations from A Rocha, Tearfund, Christian Aid and also a beautiful Postcard from our brothers and sisters in Christ from Polynesia; and the Rev'd Gemma Fraser and the congregation from St John's Moulsham explain their journey to a Silver Award. Despite the challenges of lock-down, Michael Minta will be steering our cathedral towards making changes so we can achieve our Gold Eco Award – an essential part of our Christian discipleship.

Chelmsford Cathedral You Tube Channel – full play list 'Greening the Church'
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLKMrowl1rKL3eNzwtsFQ2qBnUwSYMzQOC>

The Next Bishop of Chelmsford: please do play your part in the consultation. Simply go to the Diocesan website <https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/> and click on the button on the home page marked "find out more". This will take you to the consultation questionnaire.

Online giving on the website: you can now donate on-line to support the mission and ministry of the Cathedral. This is particularly important at the moment as the Cathedral works hard to continue ministering through these challenging times and begins to build for the future. If you want to donate now on-line, simply go to the home page of the website and click on the link, or click <https://givealittle.co/campaigns/0c7bf37c-62f7-4011-b9f0-854ead22f93a>

Being Resourced:

If you would like to receive the Dean's letter emailed to you once a week and you do not already receive it, please email clare.broome@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk

Growing in Faith resources in a weekly email. If you would like to receive it, please sign up via the 'Church at Home' page of the website or email imogen.nay@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk

Stations of the Resurrection: How do we encounter the Risen Lord in this time of darkness? Join with the Rev'd Canon Imogen and others as they lead us through personal encounters with the Risen Jesus, look at the website, or sign up to the Growing in Faith mailing, details above.

Social Time:

Book Group – This month we are reading Gulliver's Travels (an interesting choice by the Church Times!) We will be meeting via Zoom to discuss the book on Monday June 29th at 7.30. All are welcome to join us – email sallydilley@tiscali.co.uk for more information