



Church Alive
The Parish Magazine of
Midsomer Norton with Clandown
Volume 801 Number 7

Fr Christopher Writes

What does it mean to be a successful church? This is an important question if we remember that Pope Francis is asking the Roman Catholic Church to identify with marginalised and therefore the presumably unsuccessful of society. We might also note that Jesus himself was singularly unsuccessful. Not only did he die a criminal's death but he only left behind a small band of demoralised disciples who had not been notable in their understanding of his ministry and mission. So do we show our success as Christians by being completely unlike Christ? Successful and powerful, at the centre of society, while he was at the margin?



If you asked this question of the Church in Corinth, the Christians there would have been very clear about their answer. A successful church they would have replied is a church alive with the gifts of the Spirit. They were very certain what those gifts were: Paul lists them in his First Letter to the Corinthians. There are gifts of tongues, of wisdom, of knowledge, of healing, of miracles, of prophecies, of discerning spirits, of exorcism and so on. These are all very exciting gifts, dramatic gifts, and it must have been very exciting to go to such a church. Yet all was not well in Corinth. The church at Corinth was full of strife, and envying, quarrel and dissension, and worst of all when they met together for the Lord's Supper, their celebration was not a sign of their unity in Christ but rather the opposite, a time not of affirmation but instead of judgement and condemnation.

Paul had to give them the most extraordinary list of instructions. He had to lecture them about sexual morality, food offered to idols, the ministry of the Apostles, lawsuits, marriage, even what women should wear on their heads. He is very stern, very direct and very firm. His list he admits is not complete: but when he meets them he will put them right on everything else.

What on earth had been going on? Or more importantly, as they were demonstrating so many gifts of the Spirit, what had been going wrong? All is revealed in the thirteenth chapter of his letter. The gifts which he mentioned in his previous chapters, the gifts which the Corinthians were so proud of, might be dramatic, they might cause a lot of notice and even admiration but they were not the most important gifts. So he opens his chapter by writing that he might do this and he might do that but that if he has not the gift of love then he is nothing. This is the gift, he writes, that enables us to live, and work, and worship, and care for one another. This is the gift which enables us to build up the life of the Church, the Body of Christ. It is the gift that enables us to tolerate one another, to forgive one another, to endure what life and people throw at us but still go on hoping and rejoicing. It is the greatest of all gifts because however important other gifts are such as faith and hope they will come to an end. These gifts like all the rest he mentions will end because they will not be needed in heaven. Love, however, will be needed as much, if not more than ever, because it is the life of heaven itself.

Love is not a showy gift like some other “spiritual gifts” but it is the gift that transforms our lives more than any other, and it is the gift that bind and unites us to Christians and non Christians, to the successful and the unsuccessful alike. On the day of Pentecost the thing that astonished the crowd, who were from all over the known world, was that they each heard in their own language what the Apostles were saying. This was a quite different gift from the speaking in tongues which the Corinthians practised. That gift often needed an interpreter when it was exercised. The gift on Pentecost day was the absolute reverse: no interpreter was needed at all, because all heard and understood what was said. It was the sign that the Holy Spirit was being poured out on all flesh, on all the people of the world. The Holy Spirit was not a possession of one particular group of people, whether of ethnicity or religion. The Holy Spirit is not a possession of the Church or any part of it. The Holy Spirit is a gift, the gift, which as St. Paul realised unites rather than divides.

It is hardly surprising that the gift of the Spirit is indeed poured out on all people, for the Bible, tells us that all people are made in the image and likeness of God: the Spirit gives life to all people. Surely we are right to see this gift in anyone, Christian or not, who loves with patience and tolerance and care and forgiveness.

So what is it that the Church offers to the world? Perhaps the recognition that in the important things of life, such as the gift of love, there is more that unites us than divides us. So what is it that makes us different? Not that we are better or superior in the way that we live of lives compared to those without faith. We know that is not true, though it is a complaint that is still sometimes heard: those who go to church are no better than the rest of us. Indeed we agree, but as Christians we have discovered that without the help of Christ to guide us, without recognising the gift of the Spirit within us, we would quite lose our hold on this most precious of all gifts, the gift which makes our lives with one another possible, and even joyful: the gift of love. Above anything else it is that gift of love which makes our life a success whether we are notable or not, important or unimportant, rich or poor. St Paul knew that this was the only criteria which was worth applying to any church, at Corinth or anywhere else, in his day or in ours.

News from the Pews

Fr Christopher and Diane are delighted to announce the engagement of Laura to Oliver Robinson. The wedding is being planned for next Spring.

Joan Gregory

Alan, Peter and Gill would like to thank all our friends at St Johns for the kind messages and cards we have received.

Thank you also, to the many of you who attended Joan's Service of Thanksgiving.

ST JOHN the BAPTIST, MIDSOMER NORTON

SATURDAY, JULY 15th

10:00—2:00 p.m.

There have been some difficulties in finding folk to organise this year's Summer Fayre. It is a temporary blip and the Christmas Fayre and the Summer Fayre next year will return.

It is important that the funds raised from the Summer Fayre are not lost, so to replace the event a **GIFT DAY** will be held on the above date and at the above time. Envelopes will be provided and the yellow gift aid envelopes may be put inside these should you want to gift aid your donation. You may wish to give anonymously which of course is perfectly acceptable.

Refreshments, hot drinks, cold drinks and cakes will be available. We hope that the organ will keep us entertained during some of the four hours and other entertainment may appear.

The pressure on our church finances continues, in spite of last year's fantastic news when we not only paid our Parish Share in full and on time, and we repaid the annual sums and interest on the ten year loans we took out to help finance the reordering and redecorating of St John's, but we ended the year with a small surplus.

This year our Parish Share has risen and we have engaged Ellis and Co. to solve, we hope, the problems we continue to experience with rainwater seeping through to the inner walls, most noticeably but not solely in the south aisle near to the Lady Chapel. In addition this year we hope to employ both a Parish Administrator and a Children and Young Families Worker This

So there will be no tombola or bric-a-brac stalls this summer, but there will still be an opportunity to contribute to St John's Church.

The PCC do hope that you are able to join us on **Saturday, July 15th between 10:00 and 2:00 p.m.** and that you may use the occasion to invite a friend or neighbour to look round our beautiful church and to share in the refreshments.



Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

St John's Mothers' Union Report for June.

We are very grateful to the Ladies Group for inviting us to join with them, for a friendly get-together. The company and refreshments were most enjoyable. A special thanks to Carol for her kind hospitality. Members went home tired from talking too much, bloated from eating too much, but happy from the fellowship.

Our June meeting was a 'Cream Tea'. Once again, we invited members of the Ladies group, family and Church Friends. This was a most enjoyable afternoon.

Our outing on MONDAY 10th July, will be to Cheddar Garden Centre. Cars to meet in the Church car park at 10:30am. We look forward to a lovely day

Letter from the Right Reverend Ruth Worsley, Bishop of Taunton

This month I shall make my first visit to Zambia. Mostly we take holidays in Scotland so this sounds somewhat exotic and probably warmer! However it is not intended to be a tourist visit but rather an opportunity to grow the friendship between our diocese and our sisters and brothers in our partnership link with Zambia.

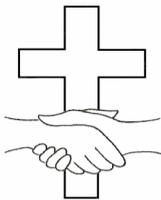
Next year we celebrate 40 years of that friendship and you will be hearing much more of how we hope to mark that milestone and develop and strengthen the partnership. We hope that there will be visits to and fro so that we can learn from one another about how we live and tell our stories of faith and how to share the grace of God in our lives.

In recent months we have seen something of a growing fear and anxiety creeping in to some of the ways in which we as a society respond to people who have a different culture, ethnicity or religious faith than ourselves. Such fear can prevent us from the joy of discovering alternative views or perspectives or engaging in novel experiences. Reticence in taking risks can mean we miss the delight of making new friends.

Trust is something which grows as we step outside of the boundaries of our known world into the unfamiliar territory of another. The call of Christ to follow him is one that takes us beyond ourselves into places of discovery and the expanding of horizons. I'm looking forward to meeting my Zambian brothers and sisters in the shared journey we have committed to walk together.

I hope that each of us will make the most of the opportunities we have both here and abroad to open ourselves to the voice of God as we experience new people, new places and new discoveries this summer.

The Right Reverend Ruth Worsley
Bishop of Taunton



LADIES GROUP JUNE 2017

Unfortunately it was not warm enough to sit outside to enjoy Carol and David's garden for our June meeting, to which members of the Mother's Union had been invited to join us for a social evening.

Instead of a spoken prayer to start the evening, David played the piano and we sang the chorus of 'We plough the fields and scatter' as a Grace. This was followed by a rendition of 'Happy Birthday' as several ladies present had birthdays imminent.

The Ladies Group had provided a varied spread of food for all to enjoy. Amongst the savoury dishes were quiches and salads along with an assortment of nibbles. Desserts followed with a choice of chocolate eclairs, lemon tart, tiramisu, cheesecake and scones with cream. Red, white & rosé wine along with soft drinks were on offer.

There was lots of chatter and laughter with both reminiscences and current news (mostly excluding the election) being discussed. A most enjoyable evening even though the lovely garden could only be viewed from indoors

Many thanks to Carol for hosting the evening.

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The meeting on 13th July is a guided tour of Burcott Mill, just outside Wells. It is now one of the few remaining examples of a working watermill operating in the UK and it produces stoneground wholemeal flour.

The visit will start at 3pm. Partners & friends are welcome to join us. Tea & cake will be on offer after the tour.

Please let Kay know during the previous week if you intend to go.

General Fund 2017

Cash Book - January to May

<u>Expenditure</u>	Actual 2017 £	<u>Income</u>	Actual 2017 £
Ministry:		Planned Giving:	15,551
Parish share	20,699	Gift Aid donations	
Clergy expenses	1,275	Income tax recoverable on Gift Aid	3,770
Church Running Expenses	1,282	Other Planned Giving	1,724
Church Utilities	1,103	Collections at all Services	1,662
Upkeep of Service	575	Bell Ringers Donations	128
Magazine & Bookstall	200	Sundry Donations non -recurring	210
Church Hall	1,860	Magazines	836
Honoraria and Support Costs	425	Bookstall	104
Stationery and Equipment	1,020	Church Hall Lettings	2,817
Miscellaneous & grants	220	Fees	1,387
	28,659	Income from investments	
		Bank & CBF Interest	224
			28,413
		Excess Income over Expenditure	-246

Note from Treasurer

The expenditure on the General account is higher than the income we have received and this trend is expected to continue for the rest of the year. Unfortunately we are unable to promote a summer fete this year and therefore we are arranging a Gift Day on the 15th July. If you are unable to attend that day, Gift envelopes will be available, please see myself or one of the Church Wardens.

FROM THE PARISH PUMP
22nd July St. Mary Magdalene –
the woman with a past

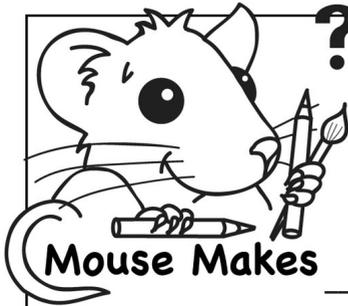
By David Winter

Later this month Christians all over the world will commemorate probably the most unlikely saint in the Bible, Mary Magdalene. There was something in her background that has always fascinated people. All we are told about her 'past' is that Jesus had cast 'seven devils' out of her, but on that slender if intriguing evidence she has become the patron saint of 'fallen women'.

Some see her as the woman 'who was a sinner' who washed Christ's feet with her tears at a respectable dinner party. Of that person Jesus remarked that 'she had been forgiven much' and consequently 'loved much'. Whether she was that woman or not, the description perfectly fits her. No one who has heard or read it could surely fail to be moved by her tearful encounter with the risen Jesus in the garden on Easter morning, the man she had taken to be the gardener revealing Himself in one word, Mary, as her beloved Teacher.

The problem with a good story – and hers is as good as it gets – is that people can't leave it alone. Down the centuries she has been John the Apostle's fiancée until he left her to follow Christ. She has gone with Jesus' mother and the same John to live in Ephesus and died there. In art and literature she has become an alluring, sexual figure, disapproved of by the mother of Jesus. There is no historical evidence whatsoever for any of this. In fact, the Gospels suggest the two Marys were close in their shared devotion to Jesus.

Her popularity is shown in the fact that 187 ancient churches in Britain are dedicated to her, and a college at both Oxford and Cambridge. Whatever the details of her story, we cherish it because it shows that having a 'past' is no reason not to have a future.



What should not be hidden under a bowl?

Matthew 5:14-15



Who was welcomed back?

Luke 15: 11-32



What ate the seeds that fell on the path?

Matthew 13:3-23



What was lost?

Matthew 18:12-13



What did the wise man build his house on?

Matthew 7:24-27



What is the kingdom of heaven like?

Matthew 13:45-46



DID YOU KNOW?

Jesus often used simple stories called **parables** to teach people about God, His Kingdom and about how God would like us to live.

In His parables Jesus used objects and pictures of the world around Him to help people to understand.

MIXED UP PARABLES

Which parable picture word goes with which?

NARROW	GOATS
SHEEP	GATE
WHEAT	BRANCHES
MUSTARD	COIN
LOST	TREASURE
GOOD	WEEDS
VINE	SON
HIDDEN	SAMARITAN
PRODIGAL	SHEEP
LOST	SEED

DID YOU KNOW?

You can read Jesus' parable stories in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke but only Luke records the parables of *The Lost Coin*, *The Good Samaritan*, *The Prodigal Son*, *The Friend in Need* and *The Rich Fool*.

S A M A R I T A N T S P S W
 U P L A M P G A T E L H H H W
 E S R O C K S A N D A E E I
 T A X C O L L E C T O R P A N
 T R E A S U R E F I G I H T E
 R L C O I N D F H O U S E E D
 E S H E E P A R A B L E R A X
 E G O A T S H O D W E E D S R

Find the parable pictures in the word search

- PARABLE • WHEAT • WEEDS
- SEED • TREASURE • GATE
- HOUSE • ROCK • SAND
- PEARL • COIN • FIG • TREE
- SHEEP • GOATS • WINE
- TAX COLLECTOR
- LAMP • PHARISEE
- SHEPHERD • SAMARITAN

ROTAS for JULY

Coffee & Offertory Rota

Date	Coffee	Offertory
2nd July	Mrs L Hurst Mrs N Dowler	Congregation
9th July	Mrs M Small	Mothers Union
16th July	Mrs H Bailey	Congregation
23rd July	Mrs P Taylor Mrs H Hill	Ladies Group
30th July	Mrs C Moore Mrs P Daniels	Congregation

Date	Reader/<i>Intercessions</i>	Sides person
2nd July	Heather Hill	S Dryburgh, L Hurst S Blackburn, M West
9th July	Carol Moore <i>David Moore</i>	K Harvey, N Barnett L Carpenter, J Shears
16th July	Beth Davies	J Bevan, J Martindale J Barnett, T Barnett
23rd July	Gary Lewis <i>Ann Munton</i>	P Shellswell, A Fitch R Broughton, S Broughton
30th July	Christine Plummer	T Marshall, M Wilton A Broadhurst, L Broadhurst

Magazine deadline for copy is the 14th of the month

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Readers, Intercessions & Sides Persons Rota