

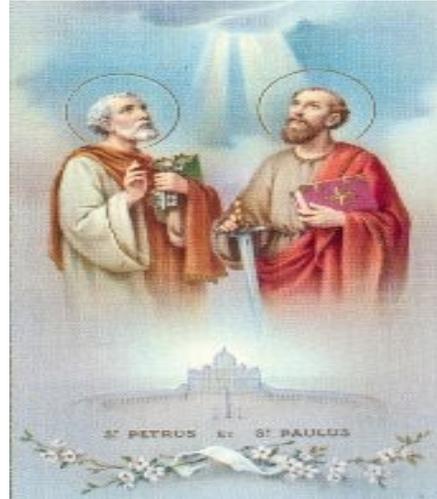
ST GEORGE'S NEWSLETTER

Date: 28th June 2020 Letter No. 15

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Today's contribution has been provided by the Right Reverend Bishop Michael Langrish,
Bishop of Exeter 2000 - 2013



Dear Brothers and Sisters

Today's Gospel Reading: Matthew 10: 37 - 42

I am sorry that once again St George's faces a period without a parish priest. However, I must also confess to feeling glad that it would give me an opportunity to be with you once again. Hopefully, this will happen before too long. In the meantime, I have been asked to share with you some thoughts for the coming week.

Tomorrow is the feast of SS Peter and Paul. Tradition holds that they died as martyrs possibly on the same day – June 29th in AD 67 or 68. One was crucified on Vatican Hill, the other was beheaded in the Via Ostiense. Each came to Rome for the sake of the Gospel, each died there for the same reason.

That much they had in common. In other respects, how different they were. First their background: One a humble fisherman from Galilee, the other a rabbi and doctor of the law.

Then their pattern of discipleship. Peter – a first generation disciple, called by Jesus himself in the flesh, who *'immediately left his nets and followed him.'* In character he seems to have been fiery and impetuous, acting on instinct – both for good and for ill. He was the first to recognise Jesus as the Messiah, and then the one to betray him so spectacularly - a person with a flawed character, yet for all the flaws able to let the Spirit touch him. It has been said of Peter that his life story could be told as *'He was called, he fell down, he was raised up, he was called, he fell down, he was raised up'* – yet all the time learning from experience and growing through it. Perhaps it was this very discipleship forged in adversity that made him into the rock on whom ultimately Christ and his brothers and sisters were able to depend.

By contrast – Paul: intellectual, well-heeled, scholarly; very much the second-generation disciple, and one who at first had been bitterly opposed to this new 'Way'. He had been complicit in the death of one prominent Christian, Stephen, then given official sanction to persecute others. Self-assured, arrogant

even, there was no stumbling and failing like Peter. Instead he had to be **brought down** – on the road to Damascus – and faced with his stubbornness and pride. Which was where, like Peter, he too was touched by Christ. No tears for him though, his eyes were blinded, and for a time he just felt himself lost. It was only when the one used to **leading** others found himself now being **led by** others, that he came to see things in a new light. Through the preaching and testimony of Ananias, eventually his eyes and heart were opened to Christ

From that moment on we can once again look at him and Peter together, each sharing the good news in their own particular way. Peter primarily to the Jewish community from which he came, and still learning from experience as he went along. Paul speaking to the Gentile – Greek speaking – society of which he was a part and using its intellectual and cultural forms and norms to tell the Good News in ways that they were able to understand.

Two very different people, but united in their experience of and witness to, Christ. Maybe this is why the Church has from the very earliest period wanted to remember them together, as if to hold these two different people and two different stories together in a single whole. With their different gifts and experiences, together they are part of the faith and life of the church. Indeed, together they are the massive rocks of its foundation – and of our faith.

How often is it so important to be reminded of this? We are not called to be in Christ in a flat-pack, identikit way. One of the real joys of the church at its best is the way in which it brings so many different personalities, life experiences, cultural backgrounds together in one shared journey of faith. Our faith, our spirituality, our Christian service, our way of witnessing to that faith and sharing it with others ought to breathe with the vitality of the distinctive individuals that we all are – and yet also quite clearly demonstrate the one faith, one church, one Lord, that we all share.

How hard it has been over the past three months not to be able to come together to worship with others. But maybe something good can come out of this experience. *'Absence makes the heart grow fonder'* we say. How good it would be if during this period we have come to not just miss, but also to appreciate others – not just those like ourselves, to whom we find it easy to relate, but even more those who are different from us, maybe those who are a bit different or tend to rub us up the wrong way. The reality is that as different as we are, like Peter and Paul, God calls us all, and needs us all – as members of one body,

Paul was not averse to loudly proclaiming his own distinctive background and credentials but would still ultimately insist: *'We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.(2 Cor 4.5)* While Peter says to us: *all of you, (whatever your background) have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind (1 Peter 3.8) . . . and so . . .(1 Peter 3.15) Always be ready to make your own defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is **in you.**'*

+ Michael

We thank Bishop Michael for his contribution to our newsletter and we hope that all being well he will lead us in worship on Sunday July 12th and August 2nd.

Open Church Update

To ensure we keep the inside of the church hygienically clean we are looking for volunteers to join a rota, perhaps every 3 or 4 weeks, to ensure the seating etc is kept clean for visitors attending for private prayer at this time. If you feel able to give an hour or so please do contact Mavis Dolton on 01243 779592.

Government Announcement

The announcement made by the Prime Minister, Boris Johnston last Tuesday confirming that the importance of collective worship in our churches has been recognised and will very soon be relaxed was heralded as good news for everyone. There will obviously be restrictions, with safer practices being introduced. We await guidance from Bishop Martin as to the governments exact interpretation of the relaxation. Meanwhile, St George's Church continues to be open to anyone, for private prayer, reflection or just to light a candle and relax awhile.

Tuesdays and Thursday 10.30am – 4.30pm
Saturdays and Sundays 9.30am – 12.30pm

To help us with the regular hygienic cleaning of the church we request that visitors refrain from sitting on the seats against the north wall adjacent to The Centre and the south wall.

Dear Father, we thank you for this update !

Thank you that we will be able to meet again, soon.

Thank you that you have given us the tools in these times,
To still hear your word and to continue as a church family together.

Thank you to those priests who have kept things going for us.

Please help those who are volunteering, the cleaning, and the wardens as they change their routines to accommodate the changes.

Please help us to be patient as lives begin returning to normal with the importance of collective worship being recognised.

Amen

Dear St George's Congregation,

As we enjoy a period of sizzling hot weather, I would urge you to support our latest venture in Whyke to plant more trees. Trees provide shade, cooling, oxygen, clean the air, reduce carbon and provide homes for wildlife and help keep us cheerful, improving our mental health and well-being. The core of Whyke is a criss-cross of residential streets which could, in many people's views, be made more pleasant and attractive with more trees. Trees are a legacy for future generations and as the climate is due to heat up those coming after us, I am sure, would appreciate our future planning and care to provide trees for their ease.

We have given ourselves a target in the Whyke Residents' Association to plant 10 trees in our neighbourhood on our streets. We are working with the County Council and neighbours with good sites near their houses on this. Each street tree costs £150. So we need to raise £1,500! This a huge ask as we ease out of lockdown with many people losing jobs and being furloughed. However people are realizing that this is actually a lovely reason to come together as a community and do something positive that has so many benefits for us as we rebuild after Covid19. This is something we can all share and appreciate and look forward to. A lot of our streets around us are actually called avenues - for example, Winden, Cambrai and Ormonde are all avenues. We would like to give these avenues back some trees so that they can be beautiful tree-lined places for us and future generations to live in and enjoy.

I have set up a gofundme site where you can easily donate online: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/mind-the-tree-gap>

We have raised over £1,000 in a week so I really hope that we will reach our target of 10 trees by our July deadline (that is when the County Council needs to

know about our plans for the planting season autumn 2020/winter 2021). We are also looking to find more neighbours who live near potential tree-planting sites and would be willing to look after a tree by watering. So if this is something you would like to get involved in please do get in touch.

Many thanks in advance for any donations – however small – you are able to make.

If you have any questions please get in touch with Sarah

Sharp sarah.ccc13@gmail.com or phone 07789 843556 or 01243 790077.



EARTHAM WOODS

I wonder how many ramblers have rested awhile on this bench by the internationally recognised 6-way finger post in the heart of Eartham Woods. (Yes, it has appeared in international rambling magazines). The old Roman Stane Street runs through the woods climbing up to Bignor Hill and beyond, with the long-distance Monarch's Way as part of the route. From here you can walk to Upwaltham, Whiteways, Gumber, Madehurst, Slindon etc.

We have the local Shippam family to thank for the donation of this post and signage, and although looking a little weather worn the locations on the fingers are still readable.

The St George's Ramblers have taken advantage of this resting spot, flasks out with biscuits to pass around. We hope it won't be too long before we are able to resume our rambling. All are welcome!

Gentle Humour

- What did the tie say to the hat? You go on ahead and I'll hang around.
- Why did the boy tiptoe past the medicine cabinet?
He didn't want to wake the sleeping pills!
- Did you hear the one about the geologist?
He took his wife for granite so she left him!
- What did the baby corn say to the mama corn? "Where's Popcorn?"
- Why did the toilet roll run down the hill? He wanted to get to the bottom!

And finally.....Yeast

Faith is not a holy thing to keep for special days. It is something to be used, our hearts and hopes to raise. Something to be added to the joy and pain and strife – stirred into the mixture of the common stuff of life.

It's the secret yeast that makes the bread of life to rise, the power of God at work in us, the thing that glorifies – homely tasks and daily duties making dull lives glow. Without this leaven we are only lumps of human dough.

Do not keep religion in a nicely painted tin – marked FOR SUNDAYS ONLY. Tip it out and work it in.....Work it into everything you think and do and say – Use it for all purposes and live it every day.