

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 49

Sunday 23rd August 2020

'Virtually Church but with some way to go...'

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday's edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. Below George reflects on the epistle set for this Sunday.

Scripture Passage

Romans 12: 1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the

exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Reflection

In today's epistle reading, St Paul describes the members of the Church as making up Christ's body on earth.

This description wasn't Paul's own idea. It was how Jesus had described the Church to him. Paul, then known as Saul, had been the arch-persecutor of the Church, trying to stamp it out, convinced that he was thereby doing God's will. On the road to Damascus (Acts 9: 1-9), he had realised that he had got it all wrong. He had fallen to the ground, blinded by a light and had heard a voice that said "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Later, he had come to realise that Jesus could only have said that if he looked on the Church, which Saul had indeed been persecuting, as now being his own earthly body.

What Paul says in Romans 12 is a shorter version of what he had previously written in 1 Corinthians 12. As members of the Church we are like the limbs and organs of a body. We are linked to each other, and need each other if the body is to function as it should. Together, we have the task of continuing Jesus' ministry on earth. Each of us has something to contribute, a ministry of our own to perform within the wider ministry of the Church. Between us, we bring to that wider ministry a range of gifts, skills, capabilities, experience, some overlapping, some quite distinct, all capable of being put to good use by the Holy Spirit.

The Gospels describe the task of the Church as to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28: 19), and to "feed [Christ's] sheep" (John 21: 15-17); in other words to spread the Church throughout the world and to nourish and strengthen the faith of all its members.

Bishop Peter has described this task in terms of putting evangelism at the heart of all we do. If we took that as a personal invitation to share our faith with complete strangers in a rather up-front way, we may have thought, “Sorry. I really don’t think I could. It just isn’t me. Anyway, I don’t know enough. Isn’t that a task for the clergy?”

It’s not like that. Making disciples is indeed one aspect of evangelism. But only God can give faith. We can’t. Ours is a supporting role. It is to show, as best we can, what a Christian life looks like. It is to let people see the joy, the peace, the reassurance and the hope that come from believing and trusting in this God who loves us with an unconditional love, forgives us with an unconditional forgiveness, and offers us that love and that forgiveness if only we will accept them.

That’s one aspect of evangelism. Another is to help those who already believe to strengthen and deepen their faith. Life can be very unfair. God sometimes seems far away. Our prayers sometimes seem unanswered. And faith is always open to doubt. There is so much that we don’t fully understand, and can’t fully explain, because the immensity of God is so much more than our human brains can take in.

The clergy, with their theological training and their time spent in prayer, may then be the people best placed to help. But the support of Christian friends or neighbours of all kinds, even just from the silent witness of their lives, may be what finally helps to pull us through a time of crisis. There is endless scope for all of us to help each other.

A third aspect is to take every opportunity to join in spreading Christian values, attitudes and standards in the world around us: in our families, in the places where we work, in our leisure activities, and, if we get the chance, in our schools and universities, in local and central government, in politics, indeed wherever we can.

Put like that, we may feel that evangelism is something we could after all be doing. It may be something that, without realising it, we have already been doing. And perhaps we can do more, as part of our contribution to the life and work of Christ's body on earth.

One day, the pandemic will end and life will return to a new normal. Meanwhile, we have an opportunity to ponder what it means to be members of Christ's body on earth. In doing that, let us pray:

for a greater sense of "togetherness" in our parish, in Camelot, and within the Diocese;

for a greater awareness of our tasks of making disciples and "feeding Christ's sheep"; and

for a greater sense of shared endeavour in carrying out those tasks.

George

Hymn Suggestion

One hymn which stresses the importance of spreading the Christian message is 'Go forth and tell'. Another which emphasises the importance of love and community as we do this is 'Brother, sister, let me serve you.'

Points for Prayers

- For our spiritual growth and discipleship as we respond to the good news of Jesus Christ
- For further services in the Group planned in August
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes
- Those suffering from coronavirus in hospitals, care homes and at home

- Need for further largescale testing and research into and development of a vaccine as soon as this can be achieved
- For those suffering uncertainty and upheaval as a result of changes in quarantine regulations
- Tristram is taking a graveside funeral with family mourners on 2nd September, North Cadbury
- Our Bishops (please see notice below)
- Prayers for those affected economically by the lockdown, for businesses and those who have become unemployed
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Services of public worship in August

Please see the following schedule of services of public worship planned for the rest of August. This does not include all of the monthly services across the Group held pre-lockdown. So if a service in the Group which you regularly attended is not included in the schedule you are of course most welcome to attend any other service within the Group. However, because of the limitations on capacity in the various churches through the need for social distancing it would be appreciated if you could in these circumstances let the relevant churchwarden know in advance of your intention to do this.

Please note that the 8.00 am Communion service at St Michael's Blackford on Sunday 30th August is an addition to the previously published schedule of services and is their first service back since lockdown. Any further additions to this schedule will be notified as and when they arise.

Sunday 23rd August

9.30 am, Communion, St Thomas a Becket, South Cadbury

9.30 am, Communion, St John the Baptist, North Cheriton

11.00 am, Communion, St Michael's North Cadbury

11.00 am, Sunday Worship, St Mary's Yarlington

Sunday 30th August

8.00 am, Communion, St Michael's Blackford

6.30 pm, Evening Service (Common Worship), Galhampton

Reopening churches for private prayer

The commencement of a number of services across the Group means that the arrangements for private prayer will now change. The arrangements for August are as follows :-

Sunday morning openings

Sunday 30th August

North Cheriton open from 9.30 am to 10.30 am

Compton Pauncefoot open from 9.30 am to 10.30 am.

Midweek openings

Wednesday afternoon, August 26th

North Cadbury, open from 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm.

Galhampton

Wednesday afternoon, 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm followed by Celtic Worship led by Alison at 7.00 pm.

Excalibur and the Parish Office

Because of concerns relating to the hand delivery of parish magazines and also the relative lack of available content an electronic rather than a printed version of Excalibur will be produced during the period of the restrictions. This will be available on the website, www.camelotparishes.co.uk, and will include Camelot People giving details of occasional offices in the benefice (this for the moment is confined to funerals during the suspension of both weddings and baptisms). The August Excalibur is now online and can be downloaded from the homepage of the website.

The Parish Office is now closed. Please contact Rob via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

Our Bishops

Bishop Peter is stepping back from his duties for the moment in order to undergo treatment for leukaemia. Please pray for him and his family in this challenging time. Please pray also for Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Bishop's Staff as they take on the oversight of the diocese in his absence.

Church of England Daily Hopeline

The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a new telephone service, 'Daily Hopeline'. If you ring the free number 0800 804 8044 you can hear a recorded message and can also listen to well-known hymns along with prayers and a reflection based on a hymn.

Premier Radio

Available from Premier Radio (DAB radio and channel 725 via Freeview TV) Sunday morning of sacred music, songs and teaching etc, 7.00am-12.00

noon. Includes 'Hearts and Hymns' by Pam Rhodes, 8.00 to 10.00 am with great variety of hymns and accompanying information.

Bible studies on weekday mornings.

Some other streamed resources

Here are a selection of some streamed resources available online which you may find helpful:-

- The Royal School of Church Music website provides a Hymn of the Day and Sunday Self-Service with music, readings and prayers.
- The Prayer Book Society has details of online streaming of BCP services.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

*We pray that 'we might live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5:2)