



The Aldershot and North Camp Anchor

Issue 17: Sunday 26th July 2020

Dear Friends,

Four years ago, as we left Derbyshire and prepared for our move to Farnborough, my wife Joy and I were privileged to be able to spend a week on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.

The island lies just off the North East Coast of England, not far from Berwick-upon-Tweed. There are only 160 residents, but the island attracts over 650,000 visitors a year.



One of the attractions of the 'island' is that although it is accessible by road for parts of the day, there are significant times when the tide comes in and Lindisfarne becomes an actual

island. In the tourist season, if the tides are right, crowds of visitors arrive each morning to spend the day on the island – returning to the mainland later in the day when the tide has gone out again. During our week on the island, there was one day when the timing of the tides meant that day trips weren't really possible and that day was, for those of us staying on the island a very peaceful and prayerful experience.

The Christian history of Holy Island goes back to the time of Saint Aiden and to the building of the first monastery there in the year 635 AD. Saint Aiden was followed by Saint Cuthbert and today there is a long distance walk called Saint Cuthbert's Way which starts in Melrose and ends 62 miles later on Holy Island.

Joy and I were on Holy Island for a holiday which was also, for us, a spiritual retreat. Such experiences are a reminder of the close connection between the words 'holiday' and 'holy day'. We found, as many others do, that Holy Island was for us a 'thin place' - that is to say a place where we felt particularly close to God.

On the day when the tides prevented the arrival of the day visitors, Joy and I walked along the shore of the island and sat looking



out to sea. Joy made a cross out of three pieces of driftwood (shown in the picture here) and we reflected in that 'thin place' on God's love made known to us through Jesus.

This year, of course, holidays will be different for us all. Many of those who usually go away will be holidaying at home. I pray that wherever you are over these summer weeks, you will find time to sit and to be quiet, to find your own 'thin place' where you can reflect on the message of Jesus, and be open to the moving of the Holy Spirit. We may or may not be having a 'holiday' – but it would be good for each one of us find some 'holy day' time with God.

Yours in His service,

Chris Blake

Worship Reflection

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. (Psalm 105 v 1)

Hymn (StF 545)

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
Be all else but naught to me, save as thou art;
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Prayer: Father, thank you for all that you have done and above all for being my Saviour. Give me grace to thank you at all times and in every situation. Amen.

Bible Reading (Matthew 13 v 31-33)



Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."



Reflection

A few years ago, I was given a gift which I put towards the purchase of a bread making machine. Since then I've used the machine to make bread perhaps twice a week. The machine is very dependable and only fails to work when I make a mistake! On a couple of occasions, I've picked up the wrong flour and tried to make bread with self-raising flour and once I forgot to put the yeast into the machine. Using the wrong flour made the bread strange, but edible. Not adding the yeast meant that the final product was more suitable as a doorstep than as a meal!

In our Gospel reading this week, Jesus tells two short parables about growth. In both parables there is the theme of something which starts out very small growing to an amazing size. To say that the small mustard seed can produce a tree which birds can nest in is a very powerful image. The black mustard, grown in Palestine for oil, can grow to six or ten feet high and it is possible that Jesus has this plant in mind – or it might be that Jesus is simply exaggerating the size of the mature plant to make his point about the amazing growth of God's Kingdom.

The parable about the yeast in the dough makes a similar point, and again the dimensions are extravagant. Sixty pounds of flour is a very large amount, but Jesus includes that measurement to once again make his point about growth. A small amount of yeast can influence a vast amount of flour. Both of these parables encourage us to wait expectantly for the growth of God's Kingdom.

One interesting point is that the Greek word for the action of the woman with the yeast which is translated above as 'mixed' more literally means 'hid'. The yeast is hidden in the dough - but its action changes the whole of the vast quantity of dough. The actions of the followers of Jesus may seem small and insignificant but, if we are faithful in our work for God's Kingdom then the whole of society can be transformed by God's power working through us.

Prayers of Intercession

We pray especially this week for -

- Those carrying out the risk assessments in our local churches and the Church Councils who will be meeting to receive those reports and to make recommendations for the future.
- Those seeking to contain the spread of coronavirus in parts of the world where the disease continues to spread rapidly.

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen

Hymn (StF 412)

See how great a flame aspires,
Kindled by a spark of grace!
Jesus's love the nations fires
Sets the kingdom on a blaze.

Final Prayer: Lord God, encourage the spark of your grace in our lives so that your Kingdom may grow. Amen.

Re-opening of Church Buildings: Update

At both Aldershot and North Camp, Risk Assessment Groups have begun to meet and in both churches these groups will present their reports to the Church Council in the middle of August. The Church Councils will consider these reports and decide when, and in what way, our churches might be able to begin to physically meet together again.

Preparing the risk assessments is not an easy task. It will be good to be able to meet together once again but it is clearly important that we only do so once we are confident that we have the arrangements in place to keep us all as safe as possible. Once the Church Councils have met in the middle of August, we will pass on the outcome of their conversations through 'The Anchor' and through our email networks.



Summer Holiday

The Anchor is now taking a two-week summer break. The next edition will be prepared and distributed in time for Sunday 16th August
