



Section News

MAY 5, 2021

Reflection

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Christian Aid

Superintendent's Thoughts

GENTILES – WOW!

One of the global challenges that has been present throughout the pandemic period has been the seeming inequality of the response to the virus, both nationally and internationally. In some ways, this is not surprising given the massive differences that exist in the various national economies around the world. But there are still some really difficult questions to answer, especially regarding the various vaccines. Such as why is it that India, where a huge proportion of the vaccines are produced, is struggling to find sufficient oxygen to give its citizens a fighting chance of surviving?



Then there have been a series of high profile apparently race-based killings, often in America; hate speech turned against LGBTQIA human beings; and seemingly endless political 'scandals' which simply underline again how divided society still is. The freedoms that many of us take for granted are not available to so many and the ease with which the rich apparently get richer is sickening.

It is against that contemporary background that we reflect on one of the readings for this coming Sunday (Acts 10:44-48). The passage comes after Cornelius' vision and Peter's dream which led to Peter travelling to Joppa and the subsequent baptism of Cornelius and the whole of his household. It is the Spirit who is seen to arrange this advance in the Church's understanding, not the apostles. Without these dreams Peter would have refused any request to meet with Gentiles (10.28), yet even as he tried to make sense of his dreams, the messengers arrive. So he goes with them, preaches a bold message about this inclusive God who shows no favouritism, and is gloriously interrupted by God's Spirit being 'poured out' on the Gentile members of Cornelius' household. Peter then responded by doing two things he had never previously thought possible: he baptised Gentiles and he sat and ate with them. Thus the Church welcomes Gentiles into fellowship, without requiring the adoption of all the customs by which Jewish believers normally demonstrated their faith.

Much has been quoted (and misquoted) about justice and what it really means in recent times. As we begin to emerge from a situation of lockdown into "freedom" as it is being described, what will that mean for OUR Church? Many words have been written about the "new normal" and the fact that we cannot return to things as they have been previously. I believe that to be profoundly true, not just in national and international life, but also in our faith lives...

As 21st century people of faith, we need to recognise that the model of God's kingdom we have offered to others has not always been as inclusive as we believe it to have been. We need to recognise that we cannot just open up everything that was previously happening and hope that there will be a different outcome. We need to hear the stories of those looking to make sense of a complex world and offer them space to share and be heard... Let us not be so 'old normal' to think that the Holy Spirit can no longer 'do a new thing'...



Notices

Dates for the Diary

Week beginning	9 th May	16 th May	23 rd May	30 th May
Sunday 4.00 pm <i>Reflection – a short 30 minute gathering using images, music and words led by Revd Rachel Borgars</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84235746908	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monday 7:30 pm <i>Discussion Group – originally called the ‘Hot Potatoes’ group, this is an opportunity to discuss current issues with some theology as part of the mix</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84961411119		✓		✓
Thursday 7:30pm <i>Circuit Bible Study – a more formal Bible study which usually meets monthly on the last Thursday in the month. During June we shall meet weekly following the Bible Month material.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88651459988			✓	✓
Friday 9:15 am <i>Prayer Group – an opportunity to pray together, bringing both joys and concerns in prayer.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82103846709	✓	✓	✓	✓

If you would like to join in with any of these gatherings via telephone, please do ring me on 01256 895878 and I will give you the details to dial in via any telephone. I do hope you will join us, even if you haven't felt Zoom is for you up until now!!

Christian Aid Week Prayer (May 10th – 16th 2021)

Great God, who makes the sun to rise, and opens the heavens
 Hear the cry of the people
 Who sow in hope for rain, but reap only despair
 Hear the cry of the people
 Seeking shelter from the storm, their hopes and homes submerged
 Hear the cry of the people,
 When creation is hitting back, with rage and resistance
 Give us hope, grant us salvation,
 Give us a new relationship with creation
 With reverence to tend this gift from You
 And say once again of the earth and all you created
 It is GOOD.

(Bob Kikuyu Global Theology Advisor, Christian Aid)