

be revealing to them. We allow them the opportunity to steal from us the Truth ~ the friendship of God.

This week we have a letter from both Archbishops to share with our churches ~ I will read it in the notices and we will make copies for you to take home and pray through in your own time. This pastoral letter was emailed out to all clergy one minute into yesterday morning ~ and had been released to the press for the same time. By mid morning ~ it was already being commented on by the BBC news as good but risking being Controversial because it dares to guide our thinking and understanding of how we behave as Christians. You and I have to make our own minds up but surely, whether we end up agreeing with our Archbishops or not at least they are doing what they are supposed to ~ pastoring and guiding the faithful! How you respond may well reveal whether you have truly journeyed through the cross shaped gate and into the Love of God.

Peter acknowledges that those who bring glory to God may well experience pain or suffering in some form and that is to their credit ~ there is no credit in receiving pain for something that you do which is wrong! By the end of the week I expect we will hear broadcasters and reporters insulting our Archbishops and trying to tell us they have no right to make comment ~ they will be subjected to pain for doing what they are called to do!

Luke records for us the ways in which the new Church that was forming supported each other, learnt to trust each other and found strength in their numbers, sharing all they had and making sure that they were as informed about what Jesus had done for them as they could be, through listening and discussing with the Apostles and then sharing with each other. The challenges today are have you recognised the Shepherd ~ do you know His voice? AND How much listening and sharing do we do at Immanuel to ensure that we know what we believe and why we believe it? How often do you join in with something of faith that is offered?

From Ascension through till Pentecost (25th May—4th June) Archbishop Justin has called us to prayer ~ The Call is titled “Thy Kingdom Come” and challenges us to cover in prayer nine hours of each of the nine days. Our deanery is rising to that challenge and we will have full details available next Sunday. There will be a prayer booklet with everything you need to focus your prayers with others across our nation ~ will you take and use a booklet? If I create a sign up board will you commit to praying at some point in each of those nine days knowing you are not alone in **Knowing Jesus and making Him known?**

Ministry Musings (7th May 2017)

Alleluia He is Risen



Today our readings challenge us to discern what it means for us to be a part of the “Fellowship of believers” (Acts 2)

There are obvious activities ~

- ◆ Breaking bread together ~ not just sharing Communion.
- ◆ Prayer and praising God.

And then the not so obvious but essential ~

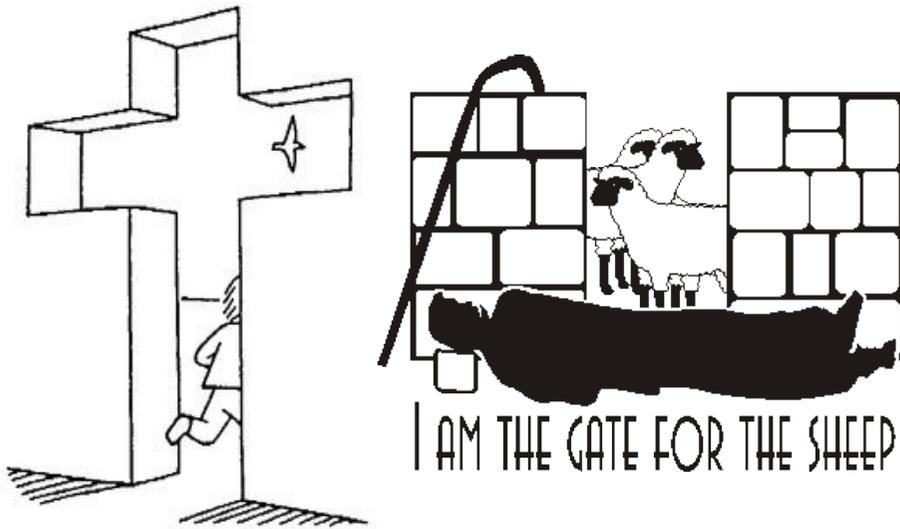
- ◆ Being devoted to each other (fellowship) and to attending to the teaching from Scripture ~ (initially through the apostle’s, oral tradition and interpreting what we now refer to as the Old testament). We was the last time you took the opportunity and time to study any part of God’s Word?
- ◆ Recognising many signs and wonders. What was the last sign or wonder you experienced?
- ◆ Having all in common. How do we interpret that in 2017? What are you prepared to sacrifice to give to others in need?

Peter writes about affirming those who suffer through no fault of their own and are conscious of God in their journey. He gives Jesus’ example of responding to insults and not retaliating but trusting God. And John speaks of the Good Shepherd and His sheep.

Reflect on the picture above ~ Where are you in the fellowship of Believers**Knowing Jesus ~ making Him known** ?

Readings : Acts 2: 42-end
1 Peter 2: 19-25
John 10: 1-10

NT page 116
NT page 231
NT page 100



Take a good look at the two cartoons that appear on the back of this week's open door. (They are available enlarged for you if you would like them.)

What do the images say to you? If you are someone who can quote Scripture, book and verse, they may bring a specific text to mind and it may well come from one of today's readings..

(Time to share)

All of the Eastertide readings are deliberately challenging. Year by year they challenge churches and year by year churches either just absorb the words as familiar or make a new response to them.

So what are the challenges this morning ~ and how might we respond to them?

The biggest of the challenges this morning has to be found in our Gospel and is where the two cartoons get their main basis.

John records the words of Jesus who addressing the Pharisees ~ those that saw no reason to change what they believed or the way they believed

it, those who were comfortable in their skins and comfortable in making others uncomfortable in theirs! They were happy to belittle others, to judge them and hold prejudices against them ~ even see them in trouble because they did not conform to all the regulations and obligations even if they were inappropriate. They certainly did not want a deeper relationship with God ~ He was convenient as an authority figure at a distance ~ a being to be feared not befriended. Whilst they had God in a Box they could go their own ways. These are the people that Jesus' words are addressed to.

Jesus tells them that if they do not recognise that they are responsible for denying the people access to God because they have no access to Him.

He tells them there is a shepherd of the sheep for whom the gate has been opened by the gatekeeper. Tells them that the sheep listen to the shepherd's voice and follow Him, that they will not follow the voice of a stranger. Could he tell them more clearly that God is changing everything ~ He is the gatekeeper and Jesus, His Son is the Shepherd who the people (the sheep) are listening to and following. Those who follow Jesus and enter His gate will be saved and be blessed (have life in abundance), they will have freedom to come and go freely because they are in His care. Those that do not enter His gate will be like thieves trying to destroy and kill ~ to stop those who desire to follow.

So where are you in that picture this morning?

Have you recognised that Jesus is the gate or Good Shepherd and God the Gatekeeper who offers you this special way of knowing Him as Father and friend.

OR

Are you still holding on to the familiar, the material, the worldly, that denies that there is this new way to journey with God in faith and worse do you try to prevent others from becoming followers by the way you behave, things you say or things you leave undone? You and I don't even have to do these things consciously we do them by habit ~ just as the Pharisees did!

What do you do automatically ~ even if you have accepted that Jesus offers you a gate to travel through ~ to ensure that you remain in your comfort zones? We all have little things ~ and as those who are the sheep we have to ensure that we do not create new comfort zones but that we are prepared to come and go freely ~ behaving as the people that God created to worship Him through our lives. We are asked as Jesus' followers to constantly check that we are living to bring Him glory. When we fail the world tells us we are irrelevant and can walk away from the Way that we should