



GOD WALKS WITH US NEVER, EVER LEAVING US.

As I sit writing this letter for the magazine we are just coming to the end of Holy Week. And what Holy Week and Lent before it really brings to mind is a sense of journey. We journey with Jesus for forty days in the desert of Lent and then we walk with him, in his footsteps, on the "Way of the Cross" from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

And it makes me think how we are all on journeys, all very different, all unique. We cannot fully understand other people's journeys, only our own. There is an old saying isn't there, that says, you can only really know someone if you walk a mile in their shoes. I would argue that that still only gives you a snapshot, but it is well worth doing because that time spent learning about their journey can build bridges and relationship.

Every journey is not straight forward. We think of the journey of the Israelites as they come out of Egypt and head towards the Promised Land. If we look at the map of the route they took it looks as though a spider has crawled over the paper! And I suspect that many of our journeys look like that. Full of twists and turns, sometimes walking through gentle meadows, sometimes over rocky hills, sometimes on the mountain tops but so often through the valleys. We often face forks in the road where we must make choices. And how often do we choose one way and then find it leads to a dead end and we have to turn back. We face crossroads where the choices are greater. There are twists and turns all the way and pot- holes just waiting to trip us up.

For me the idea of journey has suddenly become very relevant as I have reached a fork in the road and am about to head in a new direction. After nearly three years as Assistant Curate in the Woodfield team I am moving on to become Vicar of St Bartholomew's Church, Chipping, Lancashire, a big move for me, but an even bigger move for my husband Noel who is a Yorkshireman!

Like so many of the forks in the road it is a bitter-sweet moment. I am excited to face new challenges and journey with the people of Chipping on their journeys, but I will also be really sorry to leave the Woodfield Team. My curacy has been different, with so much of it taking place during a pandemic, but it has been an absolute joy and privilege to journey with you all, and I will really miss you. Your kindness and support during this time has been much appreciated.

So we all journey. But the best news of all is that we never have to journey alone. God walks with us every step of the way, as Psalm 119:105 says: "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

God walks with us, guiding us, supporting us, raising us when we stumble and comforting us, and never, ever leaving us.

I finish with one of my favourite verses from Psalm 23:4 "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

My best wishes to you all as you continue your journeys.

Wilma

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES WOODFIELD TEAM OF CHURCHES FOR MAY

For those of you who haven't heard, our fellowship groups have now re-started after the enforced break.



LUNCH LIGHT our group that supports folk who are bereaved, is scheduled to meet again in church on **Friday 27th May between 12.30pm – 2.00pm**. So, if you have lost a loved one and would like some company, a chat and a bite to eat, why not drop in to St. Johns on the 29th. You will be made welcome.

There is a charge of £3.

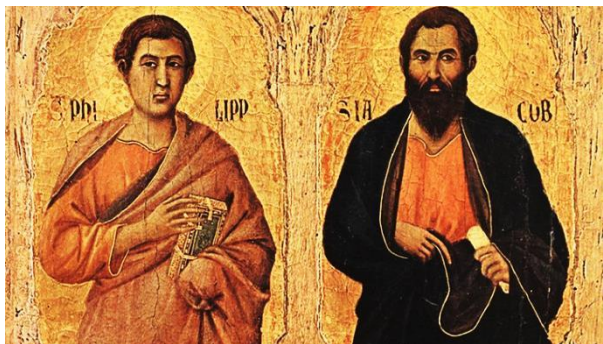
COFFEEANDCHAT@CHURCH meeting this month is planned for **Tuesday 3rd May between 9.30 and 11.00am**.

MAY SERVICES ACROSS THE WOODFIELD TEAM.

We are still not able to open all of our 8 churches every Sunday, and continue to move around on a rota basis. April's services look like this: **(all starting at 10am unless otherwise stated)**.

Sunday May 1 st	Normanton & Snarestone (HC), Swepstone (MP)
Sunday May 8 th	Wilma's Last Service – United Team Service at Measham, (HC)
Sunday May 15 th	Norton & Swepstone (HC), Normanton (MP)
Sunday May 22 nd	Appleby & Packington (HC), Donisthorpe (MP)
Sunday May 29 th	UNITED TEAM SERVICE at Swepstone (HC)

ST PHILIP AND ST JAMES



The saints for May are St Philip and St James, whose festival is celebrated on the 2nd May. Philip is the Patron Saint of hatmakers and pastry chefs and James is the patron saint of pharmacists. Not much is known with certainty about the Apostles Philip and James, apart from their names and some few references in the New Testament.

Saint James, commonly called the "Less" due perhaps to his short stature, and to differentiate him

from James the Great, was probably the cousin of Jesus. He proclaimed the gospel after Jesus' resurrection. He was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, likely elected to that post by his fellow Apostles. Because of his piety, James earned the nickname "the Just One." He never shaved, never cut his hair, nor did he ever consume alcohol or meat. He never wore anything ostentatious, but always a simple linen garment. He was stoned to death by resentful Jews in 62 AD.

Saint Philip was from tiny Bethsaida in Galilee. The stories suggest that Philip was sent to preach in Greece, Syria, and Phrygia. There is an account of Philip's martyrdom in the city of Hierapolis. According to this account, through a miraculous healing and his preaching Philip converted the wife of the proconsul of the city. This enraged the proconsul, and he had Philip, tortured. Philip was then crucified upside-down in 62 AD. However, another legend is that he was martyred by beheading in the city of Hierapolis. Nowadays their relics lie in the crypt of Basilica Santi Apostoli, Rome.

REFLECTION - THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Throughout the gospel accounts, Jesus uses one particular phrase repeatedly: "the Kingdom of Heaven." The words stand out everywhere. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like this," "The Kingdom of Heaven is like that," "The

Kingdom of Heaven is within you," "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Whatever this Kingdom of Heaven is, it's of foundational importance to what Jesus is trying to teach.

So what do we take it to be? Biblical scholars have debated this question for almost as long as there have been biblical scholars. Many Christians, particularly those of a more evangelical persuasion, assume that the Kingdom of Heaven means the place you go when you die—if you've been "saved." But the problem with this interpretation is that Jesus himself specifically contradicts it when he says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is *within* you" (that is, here) and "*at hand*" (that is, now). It's not later, but *lighter*—some more subtle quality or dimension of experience accessible to you right in the moment. *You don't die into it; you awaken into it.*

The other approach people have consistently tried is to equate the Kingdom of Heaven with an earthly utopia. The Kingdom of Heaven would be a realm of peace and justice, where human beings lived together in harmony and fair distribution of economic assets. For thousands of years prophets and visionaries have laboured to bring into being their respective versions of this kind of Kingdom of Heaven, but somehow these earthly utopias never seem to stay put for very long. Jesus specifically rejected this meaning. When his followers wanted to proclaim him the Messiah, the divinely anointed king of Israel who would inaugurate the reign of God's justice upon the earth, Jesus shrank from all that and said, strongly and unequivocally, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

Where is it, then? - Author Jim Marion's wonderfully insightful and contemporary suggestion is that the Kingdom of Heaven is really a metaphor for a *state of consciousness*; it is not a place you go to, but a place you *come from*. It is a whole new way of looking at the world, a transformed awareness that literally turns this world into a different place.

Marion suggests specifically that the Kingdom of Heaven is Jesus' way of describing a state we would nowadays call "nondual consciousness" or "unitive consciousness." The hallmark of this awareness is that it sees no separation—not between God and humans, not between humans and other humans. *These are indeed Jesus' two core teachings, underlying everything he says and does.*

REFLECTION "IF YOU WANT TO WALK ON THE WATER YOU HAVE TO GET OUT OF THE BOAT"

FOR READING & MEDITATION -MATTHEW 14:22-36

'But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"' (v.30)

The miraculous appearance of Jesus as He walked on the Sea of Galilee is recorded by 3 of the Gospel writers. Matthew adds an important detail to the story told by John and Mark. From him we learn that when the disciples see Jesus walking on the water, Peter –no surprise here -brashly urges Jesus to invite him to do the same! 'Come on, then; Jesus replies. The rest, as we say, is history. Peter walked on the water for a while but when he looked down and saw the waves churning beneath his feet he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus didn't hesitate. He reached out, grabbed his hand and said, 'Faint -heart, what got into you?' (The Message). Simon Peter was saved from a watery grave by the gracious intervention of Jesus.



We must not forget, though, that the central focus of this story, quite rightly, is Jesus Himself. Everything that happened was designed to reveal to the disciples new facets of the Lord's personality and to convince them that He was who He said He was - God in human form.

Obviously they grasped some of the truth that Jesus intended them to learn for we read, 'Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly



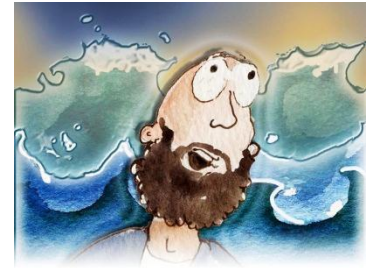
you are the Son of God" (v.33).

Every disciple should know that Jesus responds positively to those who answer His call and venture forth boldly for the sake of the kingdom. It's worth remembering too that although Simon Peter started to sink he actually did get to walk on the water. The waves became like a pavement beneath his feet.

Perhaps there's a lesson here that we ought not to miss: if we want to walk on water then we have to get out of the boat.

But - Water-Walkers Expect Problems – Don't expect it to be easy.

So Peter goes to the side of the boat. He puts one foot over the side, carefully gripping the edge of the boat. Then the other foot. He's holding on with grim determination and white knuckles.



Then he does something religious-he lets go. He abandons himself utterly to the power of Jesus. And suddenly, for the first time in history, an ordinary human being is walking on the water.

For a while it's as if only Peter and Jesus are present on the water. Peter is beaming with delight. Jesus is thrilled with his student. Like master, like disciple.

Then it happens. Peter "saw the wind."

Reality sets in, and Peter asks himself, "What was I thinking?" He realised he was on the water in the middle of a storm with no boat beneath him-and he was terrified. Nothing has really changed, though. The storm should have come as no surprise-it's been there all along.

What has really taken place is that Peter's focus has shifted from the Saviour to the storm. We all know what it is to "see the wind." You begin anew adventure full of hope. At the beginning you are full of faith-it's blue skies. Then reality sets in. Setbacks. Opposition. Unexpected obstacles. You see the wind.

It should be expected-the world's a pretty stormy place. But somehow trouble still has the power to catch us by surprise. Because of the wind, some people decide never to leave the boat. If you get out of the boat, you will face the wind and the storm out there. But you might as well know now, there is no guarantee that life in the boat is going to be any safer. But you have a life saver!



Let's Pray: *Gracious Lord, can it be that there are things not being accomplished in my life because I am afraid to venture forth? Though I know You don't want me to take foolish risks*

perhaps I need to be bolder. Please help me dear Saviour. Amen.

WOODFIELD TEAM ADMINISTRATOR

The Woodfield Team of Churches (Donisthorpe, Appleby Magna, Measham, Normanton, Norton, Packington, Swepstone and Snarestone,) is creating a new post of Team Administrator.

We are looking to appoint someone with strong administrative skills and experience to support the work of the Team Vicar, the Ministry Team and the Churchwardens. The administrator will assist with and coordinate communication, rotas and events across the team.

This post offers the opportunity and challenge to play a part in setting up these communication channels from the start.

The post offers a flexible working pattern over 15 hours per week and a salary of £12 per hour. The closing date for applications is Friday, 6th May.

Could this be you or someone you know?

For further details about this post, please Email:

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