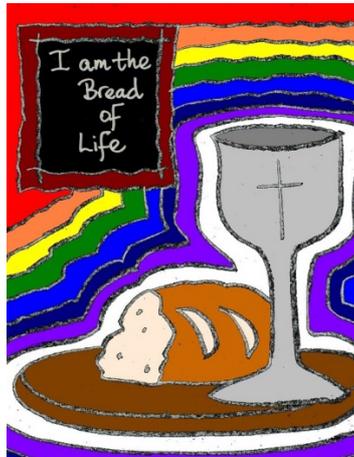


Tenth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 8th August 2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

'I am the bread of life.' (John 6: 35 & 48)

After a busy week in which a migraine managed to knock me off kilter and kept me from our much awaited Benefice Council meeting on Wednesday evening, I was relieved to have recovered to welcome the Grenadier Guards to St Catherine's at Littleton the following day, for what proved to be a memorable Thanksgiving Service for the faith-filled life of Michael Giles. Those of you who are afflicted with migraines, will understand the panic they bring in their wake. They appear without warning, and in my case, with no clue as to why. People often ask *'Are you feeling stressed?'* as they try to help me fathom a reason for a migraine attack. My response is that, no, I wasn't feeling stressed *before* the migraine, but *afterwards*, I feel huge stress looking at my diary, as I pray I will be able to fulfil the many services I have yet to take; each of which are so important in many people's lives.

So it was with great joy that, on Saturday, I was able to take the weddings of Dan and Sara Pickering at Littleton, and of John and Sally Wesley's daughter, Suzanne to Richard Sage at Sparsholt, and on Sunday, to baptise baby Robin Grujard, whose parents had travelled home from Switzerland and quarantined with family in Chilbolton ahead of this profoundly important blessing on their son's life.



'Jesus the Servant King' – The Servant Songs

This week, I am taking some time off – to recharge my batteries, spend precious time with my family, eat fish and chips by the seaside whatever the weather, and re-decorate the Rectory sitting room in a paint colour aptly named *'The Priory!'* I am grateful to Andrew Kent who has kindly offered to give this week's reflection, and to Austen Hooker, whose item on the menace of potato and tomato blight is urgent reading for all vegetable growers!



'Bord de Côte en Méditerrané' by Louis Bonamici

Above all this week, I am sure you will rejoice with me in hearing good news from Chanelle and James Corte, who, until recently, lived and worshipped at Littleton. Tragically, in 2015, their second daughter, Alana, died at birth, and the family was told they would never be able to have another child. Miraculously, they have been blessed by the birth of Sienna Emiliana, who is now 4 months old and much loved by all, especially her big sister Gabriella. What a joyous answer to prayer!

Jesus taught his disciples to always be persistent in prayer, and not to give up trusting God's unfailing love for us. As we journey through our lives in that same faith, may we be blessed with the patience and courage never to lose hope, but always to bring our prayers to Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. I pray the tale of my week encourages us that, whatever afflicts us, we must trust in the Bread of Life to sustain us through every precious second of our earthly lives and for eternity.

Yours, fed by Christ,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

Reflection from Andrew Kent

It was slightly daunting to be asked to write the Downs Benefice weekly Letter, with Revd Jax on leave. My immediate concern was whether mine could match-up to Jax's letters – particularly remembering one of great excellence that Charlotte wrote a few months ago. One of the things I have learned over the years, however, is that we all do and say things in our own ways, and that we can have something to offer to others if only we can find the way to tell it - and Jesus was adept at telling people things in ways they could understand.

Over the last few days I have been thinking about this week's Reading from chapter 6 of John's gospel - Jesus as the Bread of Life - to prepare what I want to say in church on Sunday. His message is simple, but Jesus deliberately wraps it in a metaphor which all of his listeners would have understood. Bread had been the staple food for people in that part of the world for thousands of years, and they knew it was fundamental to keeping them alive. Jesus told them that if they would accept that He came from God they could have eternal life in the next world - and Jesus referred to himself as the living bread that has come from heaven. He told them that anyone who would "eat" this bread – believe in Him as the son of God - will be sustained by it in eternal life. "Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." It's interesting to reflect that if Jesus had been following His ministry in Vietnam rather than Galilee no doubt we would now be talking about "the rice of life."

Jesus was also concerned about how people dealt with each other, and that all of God's creation should be used carefully to the benefit of all, with the well-off looking after those who have little. Having fed the five thousand He told the disciples to gather all the scraps – "let nothing be wasted." I'm afraid I can't help looking at the news each day and thinking how badly, overall, we are doing in this respect. All supposedly developed countries waste huge amounts of food, when millions of people elsewhere in the world are hungry, and sometimes dying from famine. There are all sorts of dilemmas here – to get food to needy parts of the world may be very difficult, with transport links so poor as to be effectively non-existent, and where long distance transport itself often causes environmental damage. But do we try hard enough? Perhaps because we don't care enough? Or is it just "out of sight out of mind"?

I think it is now clear that our collective actions are adversely affecting the world's climate, and we can expect the extremes of heat and drought and flood to accelerate unless we do something radical about it – and quickly. With these extremes come crop failures, loss of homes and life, mass migration, and more famine and hardship for the world's poor. Many nations recognise that urgent action has to be taken. The UK measures-up reasonably well, comparatively, but it's far from good enough yet – and action by a few nations will have little overall effect if we can't persuade China, India, Russia, the USA and others to also act decisively. In the midst of all this we see Jeff Bezos indulging himself – because he can afford to – with a space flight at huge environmental cost. Elon Musk is doing likewise, but in his case it's to increase his personal wealth - and don't get me onto unregulated crypto currencies - Bitcoin etc - which are created entirely through greed but at huge environmental cost.

Having said all that, we are developing the technology to correct many of our environmental mistakes, if there is the will to do so, and with the rapid creation of vaccines to counter the virus pandemic we have seen just how powerful science can be in coming up with radical solutions to help the world, instead of harming it. I think Jesus would approve of that, and so we offer a short prayer of thanks:

“Let us give thanks that our God is a generous God who provides the food for our bodies, but who also offered us His Son to be the living bread from Heaven, for our eternal life.”

Andrew Kent

Top Tips from Austen Hooker



Earlier this week, I received an urgent message from Austen Hooker at Flowerdown Nursing Home that he was desperate to see me. Fearing something awful had happened to the dear man, I raced to his side to ask what on earth was wrong. *‘Potato blight,’* came the reply! *‘Tell everyone to be vigilant!’*

According to Austen, potato and tomato blight is unfortunately common in this country during wet summers. Signs of ‘late blight’ on potato plants are leaves developing dark patches with spots of white mould, followed by destruction of the entire leaf. Tomato plants with late blight develop dark marks on the stems, with brown blotches on the fruits. Blighted plants can quickly collapse. Evidently, we must pick all affected leaves off immediately!!

Schedule of Services

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, with the exception of Café Church, which starts at 4pm.

Please could you continue to book to attend services by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

Please would you also continue to wear masks until we are advised otherwise.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>8th August</i>	Morning Prayer			Matins	
<i>15th August</i>		Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		
<i>22nd August</i>	Holy Communion			Morning Prayer	
<i>29th August</i>			Harvest Festival Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>5th Sept</i>	Harvest Festival		Café Church		Morning Prayer
<i>12th Sept</i>		Morning Prayer		Holy Communion	
<i>15th Sept (Wed)</i>			Holy Communion		
<i>19th Sept</i>	Holy Communion		Morning Prayer	Pet Service	
<i>26th Sept</i>		Harvest Service			Harvest Festival

Collect Prayer for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Let your merciful ears, O Lord,
be open to the prayers of your humble servants;
and that they may obtain their petitions
make them to ask such things as shall please you;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



John 6: 35, 41-51 – Jesus is the Bread of Life

Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me: that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.'

At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, 'Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?'

'Stop grumbling among yourselves,' Jesus answered. 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.' He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.