
THE MINISTER WRITES ...



Dear Friends,

At the end of Matthew's Gospel, Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus gathers the disciples on a mountain in Galilee for a final farewell. Matthew tells us something both beautiful and deeply human: "They worshipped him; but some doubted." In English, this sounds as though the disciples are divided into two groups, some worshipping while others doubt. But the Greek suggests something more complex: the same people may be doing both at once. They are worshipping and doubting simultaneously. That small detail matters. Too often it is taught that doubt is the opposite of faith, something to suppress or hide. Yet Matthew's Gospel ends by reminding us that uncertainty has always been part of discipleship. Even those closest to Jesus wrestled with questions. And still, Jesus entrusted them with the future of the church. Perhaps faith is not the absence of doubt, but the courage to keep walking even when certainty feels out of reach. Perhaps some of us need this reminder, this encouragement.

Jesus then declares that "all authority in heaven and on earth" has been given to him. In a world where authority is often associated with control, exclusion, or power over others, Jesus embodies something radically different. Throughout Matthew's Gospel, his authority is shown through healing, forgiveness, compassion, and justice. It is authority used not to dominate, but to restore. And from that authority comes the commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." The scope of that vision is striking. Matthew's Gospel begins with foreign Magi seeking Christ, and it ends with a mission embracing all nations, cultures, and peoples. Christianity, at its best, is not about erasing difference but recognizing the image of God in every person. The familiar words about baptising "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" remind us that, as one writer beautifully puts it, 'the whole of God is for the whole of the world.' This here is surely about more than a formula or a doctrine and in this context, it has to be speaking to us about the universal and inclusive love of God.

Finally, Jesus tells the disciples to teach everything he has taught them. Everything: mercy, justice, welcome, peace-making, compassion for the vulnerable, love for neighbour. And that mission now belongs to us! So, in anxious and divided times, perhaps we as the church are called not to project certainty, but to embody grace, becoming communities where questions are welcomed, diversity is celebrated, and love is lived boldly. After all, it looks like the church began with people who were both worshipping and doubting. And Christ sent them anyway!

Every blessing,

Neil

PASTORAL NEWS

We remember in our prayers those young people who are taking exams at school and university.

We thank God for those who have recently received care at the hospital and pray that their progress will continue as they recuperate at home.

A number of the church family experience difficulty with daily living. We pray that they will find strength in their faith, and we are grateful for the opportunity that our visitors have in supporting them.

We pray for the parents, grandparents, children and those who help at Tots Plus.

As our service goes out on Sundays, we ask that those who join us via the link will be blessed.

FUNDRAISING FOR HOLIDAY AT HOME

This year, we have decided to cover the cost of hosting our annual Holiday at Home event in July ourselves. Applying for grants from the council to support our event has become increasingly difficult and drawn out over the last few years and so perhaps it is time for us to cover this as a church family. The aim is for us to raise around £300 to £400 during June. To do this, please could we all donate a little extra at coffee time each Sunday morning in June. Then all of the money donated in the bowl at the counter will go towards hosting Holiday at Home. Thank you in advance for supporting this key church ministry.



HOLIDAY AT HOME 2026

Plans are well in hand for this year's Holiday at Home which will take place on Thursday 16th and Friday 17th July, (10.30am to 4pm) and on Sunday 19th July 5pm to 7pm).

Our destination this year is France and we will take a virtual tour of the country with our old friend, Chris Parfitt.

Activities will include crafts, games and some gentle exercise and there will be a concert by The Belstead Singers on the Friday afternoon, plus a 2-course lunch each day.

Or you may just want to relax with the day's papers, catch up with old friends and make new ones.

On Sunday 19th July, afternoon tea will be served at 5pm, followed by Songs of Praise, including requests, in the church at 6pm. Everyone is most warmly invited.

You are welcome to either or both days. Registration forms are available at the back of the church and in the large hall.

ECO-CHURCH CREATION CARE

Psalm 65:9-10

"You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth."

Water is essential to life and a vital, precious resource. Growing up in the west of the country, where it felt like it rained too much, lack of water never seemed likely, but life in the East feels a little different! And now the disrupted weather patterns caused by climate change are making us realise that we cannot take an abundance of

water for granted. Too much rain falls in some places while others suffer drought. As the hot weather arrives, we wonder what the summer will hold for us. Will there be plenty of rain or maybe a hosepipe ban?

A House of Lords report, just published, from the Environment and Climate Change Committee, concludes that urgent actions need to be taken to avoid the risk of serious shortages in the coming decades. It says that the country needs to manage rainfall more effectively, with new reservoirs to collect and store it. The report calls for:

- Changes to building regulations to require new homes to achieve a maximum water usage of 105 litres a person a day and increased use of grey water.
- Nature-based solutions such as restoring peat bogs and reconnecting rivers to their natural flood plains to improve the retention of water.
- An urgent awareness campaign for the whole of society to reduce water usage.
- A full environmental and economic assessment of drought to weigh the cost of doing nothing against the value of building resilience.

The part that we, as individuals, can play now is to be conscious of our water use and reduce any wastage. Not to take this vital resource for granted but to value it and use it wisely.

Eco-tips for June

- Only use the washing machine when you have a full load.
- Don't necessarily discard "grey water", i.e. used water from, for instance, your washing-up bowl, but use it to water your garden or pots.

PRAYERS FOR JUNE

7th June

June is a beautiful month of transition when the vibrancy of spring and the warmth of summer connects, reminding us that God is continually unfolding new seasons in our lives too. Let us give thanks to God for all His many blessings and may He fill us with His love, joy and peace in our hearts.

14th June

Let us remember all those who are struggling and each day for them is filled with anxiety about the future, whether it be through illness, or other concerns. God of compassion, may they feel your presence with them and the eternal hope that is found in Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

21st June

We pray for the different organisations at Christ Church and particularly for Thursday Forum's visit to Landguard Fort. May this be a memorable time for all those who attend.

As we celebrate Father's Day, we give thanks for all those who nurture and guide the young people in their care and are good role models. Bless them we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

28th June

Thank you God for everyone at Christ Church with all their different gifts and talents. Today we will once again join together for our church meeting. May we listen to God's voice guiding us in all our decision making.

CHRISTIAN AID FAYRE

A huge thank you to all involved with our Christian Aid Week event on 16th May. The plant sale and barbecue outside on the lawn were a great attraction to passers-by, many purchasing plants and food, with some taking the opportunity to come into the church for coffee and cakes. Our beautiful building was much admired by first-time visitors. Thank you to all who helped set up, bake cakes, provide plants, run the stalls and came along to support.

The amounts raised were:

Plants £304.90

Cakes £123.70

Refreshments £47.90

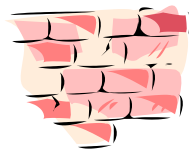
Barbecue £85.00

I am sure you agree, a most successful and enjoyable occasion.



OVER THE GARDEN WALL

... from our neighbours at St Pancras



Dear Friends,

I am writing this on the Eve of Pentecost, which in my youth in Manchester we knew as Whit Sunday. Probably I've written about it before! It was customary to go to church wearing some new item of clothing for which some kind ladies would give you a coin or two. I never did know why! More significant were the Whit Walks. Over three Sundays, Anglicans, Catholics and Free Church Sunday School pupils would parade through the streets, complete with banners and bands. There were also big city centre parades on Whit Monday. I recall hearing them as I sat doing my final degree exams!

In our churches nowadays, youngsters are coming to the end of preparation for First Holy Communion. We pray that this will mark the start of a life of Faith, rather than the first of what will be increasingly rare appearances in church. When I was at secondary school, which was just a local authority school, we had prayers, heard a Bible passage and sang a hymn every day of my school life; most girls in my class went to Sunday School. Things are very different nowadays, despite the 1944 Education Act still being on the Statute Book, with its insistence that 'there shall be a daily act of worship of a broadly Christian character.' Alas, it is no longer enforced and our children need support from home and friends to keep them within the Christian family and with a lifelong commitment to Christ.

I've just returned from a few days in Ireland. My main aim was to see the ancient monastic site at Clonmacnoise. It was founded on the banks of the River Shannon in the sixth century, and became a university of its time, with students from all over Europe. Considerable ruins remain, with a cathedral, two round towers, three big crosses and nine churches. The tenth century cross of the Scriptures, complete with many carvings, is magnificent and the setting of the site, so near the river, is beautiful.

In May 1891, Pope Leo XIII presented his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, to an eager public. It became the foundation of Catholic Social Teaching, which uses the principle of human dignity to justify the intervention of the State to ensure better conditions for workers. On 25th May, his successor, Pope Leo XIV, will present his first encyclical - *Magnifica Humanitas* - "On the protection of the human person in the age of artificial intelligence". Friends and former colleagues of Robert Prevost say that AI interested and concerned him long before he became Pope. It will be interesting to see how it is received, and its impact. The work of his predecessor, Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, has certainly had a profound influence on thinking and action concerning the environment.

Your Catholic friend

Jean

DIARY DATES FOR JUNE

Emmaus Groups

Mondays in the Lounge (10.30am)

2nd & 4th Wednesdays (7.30pm)

1st & 3rd Thursdays in the Lounge (10.30am)

SERVICES FOR JUNE

All Services will be led by our Minister, Revd Neil Coulson unless otherwise stated.

Sunday 7th June

10.45am Family Worship with Holy Communion

Sunday 14th June

10.45am Family Worship

Sunday 21st June

10.45am Family Worship

Sunday 28th June

10.45am Family Worship followed by the Church Meeting
Please bring a packed lunch to eat before the Meeting

Sunday 5th July

10.45am Family Worship with Holy Communion

6.30pm Celebration Service as part of the Eastern Baptist Association's Annual Gathering, which Christ Church is hosting this year.

The keynote speaker will be Revd. Diane Watts