

# Rector's Letter – October 2018

Dear Friends,

The Very Revd John Moses, former Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, preached at the funeral of Bishop Derek Bond here at St Mary's, Saffron Walden, on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August. He used the character reference for Saint Barnabas in the New Testament as refrain as he wove a warm tribute to Derek into his theological reflection, 'He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.'

Derek had asked that the funeral service be characterised by 'remembrance' and 'hope,' and these two significant words in the Christian concepts have a particular resonance for the Church as we approach 'All Saints,' 'All Souls,' and Advent.

As John highlighted in his sermon, 'remembrance,' as it is used in the Bible, is more than recollection, the act of recalling past events. Calling to mind our memories of someone we have loved helps us to appreciate again how they have enriched our lives. Our own history is integral to our identity, our sense of who we are. From a Christian perspective, this link between our past and our present is found in God's loving purposes. Our whole lives from birth and to death cohere in God. Nothing is lost and all is integrated into God's plan for our lives, to make us more like Jesus Christ.

We are most aware of how Jesus Christ is the Beginning and the End – holding yesterday, today, and tomorrow – in Holy Communion. In obedience to Jesus's command at the Last Supper, we do this 'in remembrance.' In our celebration, we join with 'the angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven' in worship. In Christ, 'remembrance' is sharing with those who have gone before us into eternity, the Communion of Saints, in God's eternal 'Now'.

Christian hope is robust because it is not based on our ability to shape the future but on God's promises. Our hope is grounded in a historical, yet ever-present event, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Confident in the Risen Christ, we work and pray for the coming of God's Kingdom of justice and peace. Our vision of the Kingdom shapes our thinking about the future and our actions. This means that we must challenge other world-views which clamour for our allegiance. We must combat ideologies based on nationalism, tribalism or self-interest. Maintaining a steady, unflinching hope in God demands that we are committed to God in prayer, and know God to be our life and our goal.

This is expressed beautifully in this prayer with which John concluded:

*O Father, give the Spirit power*

*to climb to the fountain of all light, and be purified.*

*Break through the mist of earth, the weight of the clod.*

*Thou art calm weather and a quiet resting place for faithful souls.*

*To see thee is the end and the beginning.*

*Thou carriest us, and thou dost go before.*

*Thou art the journey, and the journey's end. Amen*

With love,

David Tomlinson