Eccleston & Pulford Church of St Mary's – Sept. 29th

St Mary's Church Eccleston, Church Rd, Eccleston, CH4 9HT
St Mary's Church Pulford, Wrexham Rd, Pulford, CH4 9DG
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Rector: Rev Dr Stephen Torr.
Associate Minister: Rev Holly Torr.
Registered Charity

SERVICE TIMES AND LOCATIONS:

Sunday 29th September: Trinity 18 — **Pulford 11am** Harvest HC
Sunday 6th October: Trinity 19 — **Eccleston 5pm** Evensong
Sunday 13th October: Trinity 20 — **Eccleston 11.15am** HC

READINGS FOR SUNDAY 29th SEPTEMBER

Joel 2: 21-27
Do not be afraid, land of Judah; be glad and rejoice. Surely the LORD has done great things! Do not be afraid, you wild animals, for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches. Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten – the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm – my great army that I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.

Matthew 6: 25-33 Do Not Worry
"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more that food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will be not much more clothe you – you of little faith? So do not worry, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after such things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

PARISH INFORMATION AND CONTACTS:

Rector: Rev Dr Stephen Torr:	rector@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org
Messy Church: Rev Holly Torr:	messychurch@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org
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Silent Church:	silentchurch@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org
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HOMILY (by Rob Hughes) – Fellowship of Believers (Part 1)

Forgive me if I've mentioned this before recently - but Billy Graham, the morning after one of his appearances to a large crowd in Wembley Stadium, was taken to task by the British newspapers, who accused him of 'setting Christianity back 2000 years'. To which he responded, to the effect - thanks for that - I hope so! With this in mind, it occurred to me to venture an opinion about the here-and-now concerns we have, as members of the Anglican Communion, about our increasingly secular society, dwindling congregations, and difficulty securing sufficient funds to meet the ever-rising costs.

But going back 2000 years or so, the Gospels tell us that Jesus had no financial resources at all, nor any material resources either, (such as 'church buildings' or equivalent… But in spite of the immense changes in societies worldwide, The Church has survived twenty centuries on the basis that Jesus had only Himself, a few close friends, and powerful, if controversial, message about a caring and loving God. A God who created the universe as an act of love, and who loves everything and everyone in it - unconditionally. A God who is always ready to forgive the repentant. His only 'definition' of God was simple - God is Love! Why is this so difficult for so many to grasp?

His message flew in the face of the religious authorities (who relied on nonsensical rules and regulations in order to maintain their influence), and the Roman authorities (who saw Him as a potentially serious threat to their tyrannical occupation). But even Christ's execution didn't work, as we know…

In truth, I don't think Billy Graham was trying to take us back to the harsh realities of those days! But he did take every opportunity to declutter what Christianity should really be about, and how it can be practiced by 'going back to basics. Back into the community - as was the practice of the disciples/apostles and the earliest Christians. In fact, I'm borrowing that thought from Stephen T., who has mentioned, in recent addresses - the importance that Jesus placed on 'Christianity' being expressed in (**and <u>taken into</u>**) the community….

Jesus, His Apostles and communities of early Christians did just that! In these uncertain times, we'd do well to remember that, and keep the faith.

Firstly, the early apostles placed a high priority on the studying and teaching of the Word of God - then learning from each other. And as their knowledge and understanding grew of what their Lord - our Lord - had been talking about (basically, God's Love-in-practice), they then passed their understanding on to communities of potential followers, so that more-and-more people, could then spread the good news.

Attending church services regularly is, of course important, and enables us to experience the joys of communal worship, and experience a sense of 'mutual support' in worship, in prayer, and in hearing and interpreting Biblical texts. But that doesn't preclude us from, for example: studying the Bible in community/home groups; Lenten or Advent home worship groups, and similar; Silent Church in homes and community locations; friendly discussions, over a coffee with friends.

In truth, we have to make time to not only maintain our faith 'in church', but to grow-in-faith within the community context as well.

Secondly, the early church existed within a growing **fellowship**. Now the use of the term fellowship, in this context, is an attempted translation (albeit an inaccurate one) of the fascinating Greek word koinonia. There is no English equivalent, as the word means an intimate sharing of one's self with another. To us, here and now, it means sharing **who we are**, and what we stand for; sharing with others our personal relationship with our Lord; sharing time, prayers and conversation; living our faith, not just keeping it to ourselves.

Certainly, that's easier when we can meet in person on Sundays; but entirely do-able anywhere, any time. After all each of us has a relationship with God that is unique to us. That's surely worth sharing!

Thirdly, the early church met regularly, in homes, or even in the open air, in order to "break bread". St Paul wrote concerning the breaking of bread to the Corinthians: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Interestingly, the word "communion" here is the same Greek word koinonia (also meaning fellowship). So, to the early apostles, "communion" wasn't just the sharing of the Elements of the Sacrament; it was also a demonstration of the one-ness that we all share in Christ (in spite of the uniqueness of that relationship to us).

In that context, Communion-in-Christ is quite different from sharing the elements 'in church' (important though that is) but it doesn't end there, because we should continue to" share ourselves with Christ", and with each other, out here in the community.

Fourthly, the early church promoted the important practice of prayer. It isn't fourth in priority, in fact - prayer was top priority with the Apostles, alongside study of the word…. But if I may, I want to make this the subject of my next homily. So, I'll conclude with a text that, I hope, illustrates my theme. May we seek to become "something more" - "someone better", somehow closer to God, in Christ, in our daily lives - out here, in the community… In the meantime, I'll conclude with this text (**Acts 2, 42 - En):**

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved".

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NEWS

Harvest HC Service 11am Pulford 29th September.
Light refreshments will be served after the service. In addition, if you are able to, all donations of non-perishable food items suitable for a foodbank, will be greatly appreciated.

Harvest Evensong Service 5pm to 6pm. Eccleston 6th October.
Light refreshments will be served after this service. Please bring nibbles to share. In addition, if you are able to, all donations of non-perishable food items suitable for a foodbank, will be greatly appreciated.

Messy Church.

- October 20th 2024 at Eccleston Village Hall at 10.45am
- November 17th at Pulford Village Hall at 10.45am.
- December 15th at Eccleston Village Hall at 3pm.

Please contact Rev Holly Torr at messychurch@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org for details.

Silent Church. The next Silent Church will be held at 7pm on Wednesday 25th September at Eccleston Church. Please contact Rob Hughes at silentchurch@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org for details.

Foodbank. Thank you to those who have left items of food in the basket at the entrance of Eccleston Church.

Stained Glass Window of the week: St Ethelreda – Eccleston St Mary's Church (N2b)

St Ethelreda (d.679), the patron saint of Ely Cathedral, was a queen, foundress and abbess of Ely. After the death of her first husband, she retired to the Isle of Ely, her dowry. She married again for political reasons, leaving her second husband to become a nun. In 673 she founded a monastery at Ely.

Ethelreda was more commonly known as Audrey. Audrey is the origin of the word tawdry, which derived from the fact that her admirers bought modestly concealing lace goods at an annual fair held in her name in Ely. By the 17th century, this lacework had become seen as old-fashioned, vain, or cheap. Although Ethelreda is little known today, she was once one of England's most popular saints, and her shrine at Ely was a site of pilgrimage up to the Reformation.

PRAYER INTENTIONS
We pray this week for those known to us who are ill or recovering from surgery.

ADVERTS
The next History Group talk from the Pulford & Poulton Local History Group will be at Pulford Village Hall on October 16th at 7.30pm. The title of the talk is "Fake or Fortune" by Erik Irwin.

Newsletter #67 – Please email Prayer Intentions and News Items suitable for publication in the Parish News to Stephen Hutchinson at admin@ecclestonandpulfordchurches.org