

Where the veil is thin

Ricarda Witcombe *reflects on*
Revelation 21:1-6a

This weekend many churches will celebrate All Saints', while All Souls' was commemorated yesterday. These feasts give us a glimpse of eternity, of the thin veil between heaven and earth. We struggle for words to describe it, because we can only see in terms of what we already know. Today's passage from Revelation gives us some clues, however. St John sees heaven with all the wonder of a bride meeting her husband. There's nothing lonely about heaven. It's about home – the place where God lives, with mortals, for ever. It is a city, but it is holy instead of dangerous and terrifying. It is a place of relationship, of mortals with one another and God. God dwells with us, wiping away all the tears of the past, restoring goodness and life. Here everything wrong is put right, every hurt healed. Here even death, the ending that we can never escape, is finished. There is no more death, nor hunger, nor thirst. There is no more poverty, nor brokenness, nor pain.

This vision tells us that there is only one thing that lasts for ever, and that is the truth of Emmanuel – God with us. This eternal truth is not just for us – it is also for all those who have gone ahead, and for those yet to come. It is the one solid certainty in a fragile world. ☺

Eternal God, who holds earth and heaven together in a continuous stream of love, give us the grace to know and feel you with us today and for all eternity. Amen.

Prison chaplaincy

by Heather Smith

The religion of every prisoner, or their preference to declare no religion, is recorded when they arrive in prison, and they may attend appropriate religious services and groups.

These days prison chaplains are of all Christian denominations and all the major faiths. Their statutory duties include responsibility for the pastoral care of prisoners, staff and visitors alike. In addition, chaplains often provide a valuable link between those in prison and family, friends and communities on the outside. Chaplains now

work alongside a wide range of specialists working in prisons, including probation officers, education officers, psychologists and professionals specialising in substance misuse, art therapy and other types of intervention.

Many people find that prison affords an opportunity to think about spirituality and faith, and chaplains have an important responsibility to accompany prisoners on their spiritual journeys. A prisoner's relationship with God is intertwined with getting to know him- or herself, and gaining a deeper understanding of his or her human relationships. ☺



Church of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, St Petersburg

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

Lots of rain but mild weather makes this time of year more bearable than you might think. Yes there's SO much mud everywhere, created mostly by the ducks hunting for slugs and worms but the ground is also soft enough to weed and dig ready for planting bare root trees – this time Welsh apple trees,

Gwell Na Mil and *Trwyn Mochyn* from Monmouth and Anglesey, and their wonderful names mean "Better than a thousand" and "Pig's snout".

There's real description and humour in both names and I love that. They will fruit in perhaps four years so this is not a rush job. And that seems to me to be right – good things take time and patience and caring and loving. As part of creation God is in the patience and caring and loving game and we participate with God if we dare. There's real joy in that. ☺

“Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ.”

Ephesians 3:8