

Communion Service Sunday 15th March - led by Revd. David Aplin.



Mother's Day this year was a day of joy tinged with sadness as we continued to come to terms with the death of David's granddaughter, Amelia Aplin, during a football match just 8 days before. David had opted to take the Service, and after we'd sung an anthem about Mary, David used Mary as the exemplar of motherhood. But Amelia was never far from our thoughts throughout the Service, be it in the mother's love recalled as they had sat together in the hospital that Saturday evening, the role David's 'Mam' had played in creating a loving family over the generations, Amelia's sisters desire to relive one of their favourite family

holidays, the challenge to his faith that the events had represented – summed up in the prayers of Intercession.

Although deep in grief, David held it together through the Service, and the reception of Heather and Geoff into church membership added some extra light to a moving and never sombre morning of worship.

It was the **Fourth Sunday of Lent**, and though the central theme was Jesus the Messiah it was also dedicated as Mother's Day - a time to acknowledge the importance of mothers in our lives. Mothers held a vital place in our lives, David told us, because of the love they gave. Their care and affection formed the foundation of our families and communities.



Mary, betrothed but not yet married, had been visited by a spirit and told she would conceive a child by the spirit, not by human means. It might have seemed like a regular birth, but it was truly an extraordinary event. And it would have been incredibly difficult in those times, bringing shame and hardship for Mary, but also for Joseph, who was deeply affected by the situation. Nevertheless, they had accepted God's will, and raised Jesus along with his siblings, providing a normal, though not luxurious, family life until Jesus had begun his ministry. Mary had been aware of the prophecies and the path that awaited Jesus, including his death on the cross. Yet she'd supported him throughout his ministry and remained loyal to the very end.

David's own mother had presided over a large family—five children, fifteen grandchildren, and around thirty-four great-grandchildren. She had been the centre of his family and had cared diligently for David's father through his final years, continuing to be the family's anchor for a further sixteen years, setting a lasting example for them all. She'd enjoyed holidays with the family in Devon that had become cherished occasions, and that sense of love had continued to grow across generations.

As he grieved for the loss of Amelia and felt the sadness and shock of her passing, David reminded us of the importance of caring for one another, especially for sisters Harriet & Freya. But the day was not about Amelia alone, it was about mothers and the love they gave. David had spent three hours with his daughter-in-law Patricia, sitting beside the still body of her daughter. That, too, was love, and it was this love that we honoured and cherished - the love women gave their children.

Spiritual Blindness and Faith: Reflections on John's Gospel - The reading from John's Gospel was lengthy, yet the story straightforward. Jesus had made mud with his spittle, to give to the blind man to rub on his eyes. He'd needed something tangible to convince the blind man - mere words would not have been sufficient. Jesus had instructed the man to go to the Pool of Siloam—which means 'sent'—and wash his face. This had allowed the man to participate actively in his healing. The physical act had made the miracle real to the blind man. Jesus had not only healed the man physically; he'd also convinced him of his divine identity.

In our spiritual lives, physical acts such as sacraments like Mass or Communion played a significant role. And when he came to the Lord's table, David treasured the intimacy and specialness, the feeling of the Spirit binding us together.

The doubting Pharisees had cast the blind man out of the temple because they refused to believe Jesus was a prophet from God. Initially afraid, the blind man had been strengthened by the faith he had gained. Jesus heard that he'd had been driven out and found him, asking, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" And after Jesus had revealed himself to him, the man had declared, "Lord, I believe," and worshipped him.



There were moments in our lives that tested our faith; and certainly David had questioned why the Lord allowed what had happened to Amelia. But it was our faith that enabled us to carry on. And David's faith assured him that death was not an end, but a new beginning. He was not blind anymore; he could see the truth. None of us was blind to the teachings of Christ's Gospels. If we believed in the power of God and His promise - the covenant we would soon speak of in our Communion - and came to Jesus and repented, our sins would be forgiven—a free gift given in love. If we came to our Lord in faith, we would have a place in our Father's house. We were to be sure of it, confident in it, and to be happy in the love of Christ.

At the end of the prayers of intercession David said, "Lord, I thank you for giving me the strength to go on today and to say these words."

I think all of us present were with David, hoping and willing him to come through probably one of the most difficult services for him that you could imagine.

A little vignette from the quiet time after the Service. Support comes in many forms, and for some it comes naturally. We are lucky to have the church community that we do.

