



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ALRESFORD

ST. GREGORY'S, ST. JOHN'S, AND THE METHODIST CHURCH

Looking Back - Bournemouth March 2017

As reported last month, over the second weekend of March members of St Gregory's, St John's, St Mary's (Old Alresford) and Alresford Methodist Church enjoyed a wonderful time of study and reflection based upon St John's accounts of "The Woman at the Well", "The Healing of the Blind Man" and "The Raising of Lazarus". We were expertly lead by Canon Paul Townsend and Sam Barnes.

Canon Paul started us off on the Friday evening with an overview of St John's gospel to help us put the three stories into context. Then on Saturday we had three study sessions, one for each story. Canon Paul started each session by taking us through the reading in detail, offering a fascinating insight and first hand accounts of his visits to the Holy Land that greatly helped our understanding of the text. We then broke into groups to reflect on what we had heard.

There was plenty of time to relax and enjoy Bournemouth on the Saturday with swimming in the pool, walks on the beach, trips to the shops, visiting the wonderful Russell Coates museum or for some, watching the rugby! Later in the evening many of the groups had fun with a quiz.

On Sunday we spent some time planning our worship with different groups preparing the music, prayers, dramatic readings and reflections of our time together. This resulted in a wonderful service, sharing our faith with friends old and new.

I thought it would be good to share the reflection that was prepared for the service as it gives a great insight into the weekend. Many thanks to Sue Trowbridge for capturing our thoughts for us so brilliantly. The reflection starts with a phrase that Canon Paul used frequently during our studies.

Who is God if this man Jesus, in his actions and his words, is a revelation of God?

Just as Jesus led the various characters in the stories we have looked at to see him as prophet, Son of Man, the Resurrection and the Life, so we have been led in our understanding of the revelation of God.

But more than this, any outsider looking in on our gathering would have seen us as a group of Christians, not as our separate denominations.

We feel we are part of one sheepfold of which Christ is the shepherd.

Jesus, Martha, Mary and Lazarus were friends and out of their friendship grew new life and resurrection. So we have become friends and we have been led spiritually towards a growth in our own faith and understanding of the scriptures.

We have experienced not just a re-charging of our batteries but a real spiritual enrichment.

It is radical to realise that not only are we searching for Jesus but that Jesus thirsts for us and desires us to come to understand and know him.

In our groups we ended up by trying to analyse how our reflections on each passage could lead us forward.

Perhaps we need now to be open to change in our lives, and to move forward in our churches, but more importantly to move forward together in one faith.

Looking Forward – Bournemouth 2018

Our next away weekend will be back in Bournemouth on 16-18 March 2018. Put it in your diaries now! More details later in the year.