

**October 2018**

*The Rector writes:*



## **‘WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?’**

I have always enjoyed the challenge of quizzes and puzzles, from my daily battle with the cryptic crossword in the ‘Daily Telegraph’, to the perplexing complexity of ‘Round Britain Quiz’ and ‘University Challenge’, and the teatime teasing of ‘Pointless’ or ‘Eggheads’ - a good quiz is both entertainment and exercise for brain and memory. One of my favourite television quiz shows is the light hearted sports quiz, ‘A Question of Sport’. One of the rounds in this quiz over the years has been titled, ‘What happens next’. Contestants are shown film of an event which is stopped before a certain incident and have to remember what that incident was.

‘What happens next’ is an intriguing question for us today isn’t it? What happens next for Brexit? What happens next for the Church? What happens next for our family/our job/our future? The answer is that we don’t know, we can only live in the present time. But we can learn from and be informed by our past history and use it to prepare as best we can for whatever happens next!

When he died, St Martin’s body was claimed by the men of Poitiers, where he had spent ten happy years. In a daring raid the men of Tours snatched the body and took it to Tours, where it was given a glorious heroic funeral. The people of Tours were convinced that St Martin would bring them fame and fortune and make Tours a major place of pilgrimage. They were right – but not for the reason they imagined. It was not for his fame, fortune or heroism that Martin would be revered – but rather his devotion, prayer and spirituality. It was not in the celebration of his life and fame in Tours itself that the ‘cult’ of St Martin was established, but in a line of spiritual succession through the ‘celtic’ movement in Ireland (Tara), Scotland (Iona & Galloway), both St Patrick and St Columba were greatly influenced by Martin’s teaching and ways of training disciples – and it was their missionary zeal that led to the final full conversion of England, Gaul, and even America.

In England the Christian church had gained a foothold in parts of the Roman community, and had developed into a cosy, comfortable, domestic way of life. Aristocratic and inward looking, well integrated into the Roman way of life and making little devotional demands and no call to evangelise the indigenous population, the church needed to be challenged. Various disciples of Martin arrived in 396 bearing letters of instruction from Martin, demanding that the church 'forsake its worldly ways, give away its wealth and practice a life of austerity'.

Little is known about what happened next – but in AD750 the Venerable Bede records that the two remaining churches from Roman Britain were dedicated to St Martin of Tours. Bede also records that the owner of the Roman Villa at Lullingstone became a Christian and converted his farm into a Christian meeting place. Later churches at the entrances to that estate constructed in medieval times were dedicated to St Martin – and both at Eynsford and Chelsfield remain today.

At St Martin's we recently took part in the heritage weekend and over 100 people came to explore the church and look at its historic records and artefacts several expressing amazement that our records go back so far and intrigued by the snapshots of the most recent parts of our long history.

Now we are about to embark on a new chapter for St Martin's as we look to work more closely with our neighbours at St Mary's, Green Street Green and All Souls, Pratt's Bottom. Our plans for the future are awaiting legal clarification but the plan is for Revd Ruth Murfitt and me to be licensed as Priests-in-charge of our present parishes, and as Associate priests in the other. This will enable us, in consultation and co-operation with our PCC's and congregations, to establish a workable pattern for worship, pastoral care, teaching and outreach which can be developed further after our retirements and the appointment of the next generation of clergy to serve in these places. Please do continue to pray as this process moves forward over the coming months

Yours in Christ

Reverend John, your Rector.