



Our front article is written by our Vicar,

I am the Bread of Life”

During a number of weeks over the summer, the Gospel readings in our services came from John chapter 6. We started by hearing the story of the young boy who gave his simple lunch of bread and fish to Jesus who miraculously used it to feed five thousand people. Those who were fed in this way were amazed at Jesus and posed a real threat to him – with some wanting to seize him by force and make him their king. This wasn’t what Jesus wanted and he took a boat to the other side of the lake to escape. He had come to do so much more than just meet people’s physical needs. Yes, he had come to feed the hungry - but his purpose

was to transform people in body, mind and spirit. When the crowds met up again with Jesus they had one question on their lips ‘Who are you?’ and the reply they got was “I am the Bread of Life.”

*I am
the Bread
of Life*
John 6:35



For the people that Jesus encountered, bread was essential for life – without it, they couldn’t live without it. Most of us will eat bread each day, it’s one of our staple foods, but we so often take it for granted. All we have to do is pick up a loaf from the supermarket shelf – and there’s so much choice: white, brown, wholemeal, granary, French, ciabatta, sliced, unsliced,

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rye, bloomer..... So maybe for us, Jesus' words don't seem quite as powerful as they were to those for whom having bread or not having bread could mean the difference between life and death. Jesus linked himself with the one thing vital for life, the one thing needed to stop hunger, and he made the promise that "whoever comes to me will never go hungry" and that those who believe in him will have eternal life.

As well as the practical help given to those who were hungry, feeding them a picnic of bread and fish, Jesus also wanted to feed their spiritual hunger. He yearned for them to get to know God more deeply, for their lives and their communities to be transformed so that they embodied God's love and generosity at all times.

This chapter in John's gospel reminds us that Jesus is interested in all aspects of our lives – from the mundane matter of stopping people feeling hungry to caring about people's innermost spiritual concerns and desires. He offers food for the body and food for the soul.

As a church, we have to spend time not just thinking about our relationship with God -"feeding our souls"- but also on the mundane, practical matters of our life together – "feeding our bodies". At the beginning of August, following a PCC decision made at their July meeting, we launched our Gift Day appeal. The heating in the church hall needs replacing urgently and various items of maintenance need to be carried out in the next 12 months. The total cost of these works could be around £25,000. We may be able to get some grants to pay towards this but will need to pay for some of it by raising money ourselves. There are some items of work that we may be able to do ourselves if we can find volunteers.

To ensure that St Martin's continues to be a place where God's love and generosity is witnessed, the PCC has decided to have a Gift Day on Sunday 13th September. They are asking everyone to consider whether they could do any of these three things:

- make a special financial donation towards the Building Fund
- increase their regular weekly giving
- volunteer to help in maintaining our building.

Our summer Gospel readings have reminded us that God is interested both in the practical things of everyday life, such as money and maintaining our buildings, as well as wanting to nurture our souls. If we can keep our building warm and in good repair, not only will we be able to worship in comfort in a building that will serve us well for many years to come but we will continue to be able to invite the wider community into our building. This not only helps us financially but provides an important way of engaging with other people and sharing God's love with them so that together we may all grow in relationship with God.

Like the small boy who didn't feel that he had much to offer with his small lunch of bread and fish, we may feel that we don't have much to offer. Let's remember that Jesus took the boy's meagre offerings and did amazing things with them. Through our offerings, we pray that God's love and generosity will be witnessed abundantly as we faithfully serve him in our church and in our community.



I would like to take this opportunity to encourage everyone to consider carefully and prayerfully how you can best respond to the Gift Day Appeal. There are information packs available in church, so please do pick one up if you haven't received one, or contact me directly. There will be a special service at 10.00am on **Sunday 13th September** as a culmination of this

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appeal, thanking God for his goodness to us and asking God to bless us as we carry out the necessary works on our building.

A prayer for our Gift Day:

Almighty God our Father, we belong to you.

All that we have comes from you:

Our family and friends, our health and life, our possessions and energy, our leisure and abilities.

Help us to share in the blessing of giving as well as the happiness of receiving and guide us as we respond to our Gift Day.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.