

## From the Chaplain...

The word 'abide' occurs repeatedly in our Gospel reading this Sunday (John 15. 1-8). The Greek word *meno*, variously translated as to remain, stay, abide, or dwell, occurs forty times throughout the Gospel of John. It's worth asking, then, just how the word is being employed here. Truly to 'abide' in God obviously requires more than just mental assent and instead calls us to undertake a risky form of obedience that takes up our whole selves. So, if we're tempted to think of 'abiding' as an easy or passive stance, then we will have misunderstood what is being asked of us. As the image of the vine and branches makes plain, we're being called into a relationship with God that is life-giving, but not one that absolves us of all responsibility. We must expect to bear fruit from the nourishment we receive. The possibility that we may be pruned is less a threat intended to frighten us than a simple recognition of what 'abiding' in God is all about (v.2). This is not about testing our abilities or demanding that we earn our way into heaven; quite the opposite. It is rather an image that makes clear that who we are and what we do are inextricably bound up in each other. Our ability to be and to behave as the creatures God intends – this being and this doing both proceed from our willingness to accept our radical dependence upon Christ. 'Abide in me as I abide in you', Jesus says, for 'as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me' (v.4). Despite all our striving to justify ourselves to God and each other, here we are called to begin in relationship. The action follows from the being, from the 'abiding', and not the other way around.

At this Sunday's service we will celebrate the baptism of Matthew Eyre, son of Chapel organist Jonathan Eyre and his wife Kate. We will also welcome back to the Chapel the Revd Pat Mann, former chaplain, who will perform the baptism and preach the sermon. As befits such a joyous occasion, celebratory refreshments will follow in the Queen Mary Undercroft after the service. Everyone is very welcome!

Yours faithfully,  
Robert

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