

Faithful Creator, whose mercy never fails:

by your Spirit, deepen our faithfulness to you and to your living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It's good to be here with you tonight.

Prayer and Party – themes of our readings, themes for Jutta's life and ministry, with her particular gifts around prayer and, yes, party, namely building community.

Did you notice that the first reading begins with prayer ("I bow my knees") and then says something rather fundamental about the way we might understand how we relate to everyone. "I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name".

This goes further than welcoming people. Yes, it's important to be welcoming. And I trust you are. Yet there can also sometimes be something of "welcoming people to **our** turf" when people come to church who we have not seen here before. Recently, I saw a notice in a church entrance that said something along the lines of "you're not just welcome. You belong". That's quite a shift, isn't it. It implies an acknowledgement that every single person's arrival changes something, brings something to the table – they are not just welcome to the party but belonging means they are invited to dance. That can be lovely, or challenging, or enriching or annoying or inspiring. A bit like you and me then! It's not our church. It's God's. And that is a particular role and vocation of Great St Mary's, to serve its congregation, of course, but not as an end in itself but also in order to build that community that gives life to GSM's vocation as a University Church, as the church prominently in the centre of the city of Cambridge: a church for all people, extending God's welcome in all you are and do, whether or not you share the Christian faith which motivates our engagement.

It is particularly fitting at the beginning of this new chapter of ministry, that the prayer begins "being strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner self." Because we pray tonight for such strengthening for Jutta in her ministry in Cambridge, we pray with trust and hope because it is according to the riches of God's glory that God grants this. And God is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think.

I want to use this opportunity to thank those of you who both through and after more difficult times have contributed so much to the life of the church here. There are the big, more prominent roles in upfront ministry, churchwardens and so forth, as well as all the 1000 little jobs that only get noticed when they're not done, from flower arranging to Electoral Roll Officer, from safeguarding to cleaner. ...

And I want to encourage you in your support for Jutta. You have already started working together but making this more permanent now is (if you'll allow me the slightly dodgy metaphor) it's a bit like marrying after living together ... – although you have got to know some of each other's little ways, it does still change things. Please keep in mind that Jutta, like us, has a dual vocation: to her ministry **as** to her husband, family and friends. Even though she is full-time, please keep in mind that she has a day off.

There are rather lovely words on the communion of Christians written to the Ephesians. Christians can be every bit as territorial and opinionated as anyone else (?!). No wonder

the apostolic prayer begins with a petition for the presence of the Trinity to move in with us. God forges us into communities, and then it takes nothing less than the power of the Trinity to keep us there. The prayer suggests that progress will be slow — a crop inching toward fruitfulness, a building rising brick by brick, both anchored in a love that can do what knowledge cannot.

We have all observed how public discourse and individual communications, virtual and personal, have become merciless. Will you be known for kindness – in church, at work, in your neighbourhood, even and esp when you have disagreements? I will be mentioning later the tremendous 800 year legacy of Great St Mary's in public life, and I would suggest to you that it is ever more urgent to model engaged, truthful, passionate debate that is nonetheless kind because it searches for the common good.

Prayer and Party. It's definitely a party in Cana in Galilee. Whole community is involved.

What is the point of the Cana story?

The point is to present Jesus as the Bible speaks of him - the desire of the nations, the joy of all people.

He came to present not a cold religion of duty but a religion of delight.

We are to do our duty, certainly, but we are to delight in it, for the love of our neighbour, for the love of God.

For the hosts at Cana, running out of wine was a huge embarrassment, shameful in the community.

I think there is a sense in our communities - and you can tell by the many and varied attempts of dealing with it from various perspectives - I think there is a sense in our country, cities and villages that we are running out of that which makes a community cohere, hang together, work healthily. In fact, the more the word *community* is used, the more we begin to suspect that it isn't all quite as *communal* as it should be.

We're missing the wine that oils our community connectedness, if you'll allow me to mix my metaphors.

Running out of wine is a huge embarrassment. It suddenly restricts access to the table. It limits hospitality. It excludes invariably the weakest. That's what happens when community life breaks down. So it cuts right across the purposes of God's feast of life. At God's table there is space for everyone, from high chair to wheelchair.

The wonderful thing is that Jesus doesn't pour us some toe-curling self-conscious, contrived, trying-ever-so-hard-that-it-soured beverage. Rather, he pours the best wine, the wine of God's extravagant love, the wine of passionate commitment to God's kingdom.

Finally: John's Gospel has a very sacramental imagination. So you can imagine him using water and wine to say something about our journey from water to wine. The water is *us*, friends. We begin the transformation journey at the waters of our baptism, the most ordinary water in the world. Since with Christ, we become extraordinary, we become children of God, and we rise from the waters of baptism to receive the eucharistic wine. And so the water of our humanity is changed into the wine of Christ, as it were, that substance which we imbibe in order to envision a happiness, and a cause for celebration that we could never have generated for ourselves.

Prayer and Party. That is the pattern of Christ. A good one for Great St Mary's and St Michael's too, I say, as you open this new Chapter with Jutta.

So now, for Jutta as for Great St Mary's and St Michael's, to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.

Jutta, may God bless richly you and your ministry here.