

## Newsletter 32

I write this letter shortly after listening to two excellent keynote speeches at the Diocesan Development Day on Saturday 2 October by bishop Graham Tomlin and Bishop Sophie.

They addressed the questions:

*'What is the church for?' and 'Why are we called to be lights for Christ?'*. I found them helpful in thinking about 'everyday faith in everyday life'. If you would like to listen to these talks, here is the link to a recording of the whole morning's sessions

<https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/news/diocesan-development-day-livestream>

Graham Tomlin's 40-minute talk on 'What is the church for?' begins at 1 hr 10 minutes

Bishop Sophie's 45-minute talk on 'Why are we called to be lights for Christ?' begins at 2 hr 5 minutes.

These questions are both relevant as we reflect of the ministry of our church during the vacancy and beyond. They are also relevant to the words spoken at baptisms when a candle is given:

*God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and has given us a place with the saints in light.*

*You have received the light of Christ;*

*Walk in this light all the days of your life.*

*Shine as a light in the world*

*To the glory of God the Father.*

Bishop Sophie spoke inspiringly about the light we as Christians can bring to the darkness in the world, which complemented Bishop Graham's affirmation that we, as a community of Christians, demonstrate values in our everyday lives that are more in keeping with a world as created by God than the 'dark' situations that we see around us.

We look forward to our Harvest Lunch at St. John's this Sunday and thank those who are organising and doing the cooking. We also thank all who have decorated our churches for harvest, and those who have contributed gifts for the Archer project. A reminder that our Harvest appeal this year will be shared between the Archer Project and Medecins San Frontières (Doctors without borders), unless you specify otherwise when making a donation.

In the next newsletter, we will give details of the All Souls Service and Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, to be held at St. John's on Sunday 7 November at 3.30 pm. In the meantime, we will have held our first mid-week communion at St. John's at 10 am on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October. The next one will be at Holy Trinity at 10 am on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

With warm wishes, Angie

## **SERMON FOR SUNDAY 26<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021.**

I like to keep certain cards I've been given. They are usually of -from people I care about but sometimes its because of the picture and message on the front. One of my favourites has a tongue-in-cheek religious cartoon.

Imagine you are standing behind Moses and looking down at the Israelites. On either side the waters of the river have been stopped. They're like walls on either side. The river bed stretches in front of them and they have been told to cross over into the new land. They are looking but not moving. Moses is getting quite cross, waving his staff at the people. He is saying "What do you mean, it's a bit muddy!"

The Israelites of the first generation who had followed Moses into the wilderness were a motley crowd of people and must have found conditions difficult. Often they grumbled.

Our first reading presents a picture of them at it again. Murmuring. Muttering. Getting cross. Perhaps shouting at Moses. And at God.

Looking back to the good old days in Egypt with all its foodstuffs. Forgetting they had been slaves.

They are tired of a diet of manna. Give us meat they cry.

So God sends them meat. Quails. And they are told they will have to eat quails till they sick of the sight of them. It will be coming out of their nostrils!

The task for Moses is to make them into a real community, a people, not just a bunch of individuals. And its impossible.

They have to stay in the wilderness until the old generation had died and a new one which has never known anything else takes over, becomes a nation, and a fighting force. Hardened. Tough.

And as a community they need rules. Moses finds it too big a job so is moved by God to appoint the 70 and the spirit of God descends on them. But they only act once except for two. When Joshua tries to stop them, thinking it is undermining Moses, Moses disagrees. Let the Spirit build new leaders.

The Israelites are able to begin the conquest of Canaan and to create a new people and a new religion – centred on faith in one God, Yahweh.

Mark's words seem a problem. It doesn't sound like Jesus, does it?

The scholars tell us that Mark possibly put together a number of statements uttered by Jesus at different times.

Verses 35-37 shows Jesus instructing his followers on what it means to be one of his disciples. Real leaders are to be servants of all. Must welcome newcomers and so welcome him.

Verses 38-50 considers who really is a disciple; its anyone who acts in Jesus' name and demonstrates God-given powers.

Verse 42- they're told not to offend new disciples, no stumbling blocks which might causes newcomers to fade away, put them off. If you do the penalty will be severe.

V43-49 is teaching on ethical and moral behaviour

Cutting off anything which might cause you to sin, take you away from what Jesus has taught them

Sounds grim and indeed there have been those who have taken it literally One such was the Church Father Origen who had himself castrated .

Jesus is really trying to get his followers to try to give their all to God and try to get rid of anything which might become a barrier to growth in the Spirit.

In summary Jesus, like Moses, is building a new community, the Church, who will demonstrate real care and love for one another and be his Body in the world..

Finally James: how to sustain the new Christian community? By offering practical help and care to one another; prayer is effective -it works just as it did for Elijah. Know that God isn't some vindictive deity, hard to please and at times cruel but rather Love in action through his people. So Christians must show each other compassion, especially in times of stress and need..

God acting through his people: I want to mention now one current example of this reaching out to people from different cultures and nationalities, united by their love of peace and goodwill to others. It is the Community of Reconciliation, symbolised by the Cross of Nails, started in Coventry in the bombed ruins of Coventry cathedral Our parish is one of many who are members and some meet outside by the Cross to say a short litany. And the wonderful thing is that once a month, using zoom, women and men from all over the world meet and greet each other and care for one another and say the litany together. From all over the world. Germans. Dutch. American. South African. Poles. Scots. Irish. English. If there is a connecting theme running through the readings today it is becoming a new people, a community with shared ideals, reaching out to one another as followers of God, of Christ, showing love, reconciliation, compassion.

Jewish: offering the ideal of the one God and how to serve him no matter what may happen.

Christians: a world-wide Church with individual churches such as ours.

International: the Community of Reconciliation, recognising that all peoples, races, women, children and men, are God's people, to be cared for as oneself in obedience to the God of love revealed by Jesus Christ. To live in peace.

Amen.

## Harvest Communion 3 October 2021 10 am at Holy Trinity

### CATCHING THINGS

This past 18 months, avoiding catching Covid has featured large in our everyday lives. Last Saturday, I had a flu jab – another measure to avoid catching something. My 7-year old granddaughter Bibi caught chicken pox a couple of weeks ago.

What illnesses have you caught, perhaps in childhood? Would anyone like to share your memories?

### CATCHING GOOD THINGS

There some things that it is good to catch ...

*Yawning* ... is contagious. Researchers have found it has benefits – you take in more oxygen when you yawn. So it is a good thing to catch.

*Laughter* can be infectious ... a boy at our school had the sort of laugh that gradually built up, and the whole class enjoyed listening and laughed with him. And laughter is good for you.

*Appreciation* of a good theatre production – loud applause ... first, one or two stand, then gradually more – until maybe the whole audience is on its feet. This feels good for both performers and audience.

So, what other good things would it be good to catch, as Christians, as the Body of Christ in this place, and why, and how?

**Any suggestions for 'good things to catch'?  
And why?**

### IN SUMMARY, IT IS ABOUT CATCHING CHRIST-LIKENESS

As Christians, we seek to be like Christ:

- to love – in the many ways this can be shown - forgiveness, compassion, listening, offering comfort, caring for others ...
- being joyful ...
- being generous ...
- communing with God our Father ...

### HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO HARVEST THANKSGIVING?

Our bible readings assure us of God's provision of our basic needs – food and clothing. We are urged not to worry about these things – ‘

<sup>33</sup>But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (*Matthew 6.33*)

This applies to all people, all of creation.

Our readings warn of the danger of being too preoccupied with providing for ourselves –

<sup>9</sup>But those who want to be rich fall into temptation ... <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, ... (*1 Timothy 9,10*)

<sup>27</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? (Matthew 6.27)

If this applies to all people, all of creation, we have a responsibility to share what we have with those who, for whatever reason, do not have food or clothing – so is a great worry for them.

This is what we do at Harvest time – we show thanks for what we are fortunate to have, because we happen to live a country where this is possible. But what about those not so fortunate, in countries with war or famine or drought or flooding or devastating fires?

Our response in this church is to encourage sharing by bringing gifts on an ongoing basis for the Food Bank;

each year for the Archer project, providing food and clothing where needed; and this Harvest, in addition, by our harvest appeal being shared with Medecins San Frontières (MSF) – doctors without borders. Those people who share their medical expertise in countries in crisis who don't have enough.

### BACK TO THE QUESTION OF HOW YOU CATCH CHRISTLIKENESS

- Inspiration from hearing about others – e.g. David Nott – MSF doctor who wrote an inspiring book, 'War Doctor', which Peter Ingram wrote a review of for TRIO last year;
- Hearing about Jesus life – in hymns, bible readings
- Seeing what other people do – I love those One Show 'Big Thank You' that they have on Thursdays – appreciating people who have helped their communities in all sorts of ways

So, I believe we can *inspire each other* by the Christ-likeness each one of us displays.

Hopefully we can also be *inspiring as a Christian community, a church*, by the love and care we show, as the Body of Christ.

And by the *Holy Spirit* – when Jesus was walking with those people on the Emmaus Road after his resurrection, at first they didn't realise it was him. Afterwards, when he had broken bread with them then he disappeared, they said, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road'.

Burning is an interesting word for this – fires burn, and they spread. So, an interesting image for 'catching' Christlikeness.

### COMPASSION CAUGHT ON FIRE

This song we will listen to next was the starting point for this talk. I find the music itself stirring, and the choir singing – and if we look at the words, they are all about sharing, with compassion. Compassion caught on fire – a very good thing to 'catch'.

I invite you now to listen to the music and the singing of this song, and let us all ask God to help us catch Christ's compassion both as individuals and as a church.

**AMEN**

## **Compassion caught on fire**

In a world where half are starving  
And where some grow sleek  
Where the poor endure great hardship  
Disease destroys the weak  
Half of us still live unmindful  
Of the human cost  
Or the fortune that is wasted  
Such abundance lost

In a world of such indifference  
Greed has made us mean  
Can the story of God's passion  
Restore what might have been?  
Shall we learn a new compassion  
Holding Jesus' hand?  
Shall we leave our old-world values  
To gain the promised land?

Shall we rise to God's great challenge  
And ourselves be raised?  
Building here on earth God's heaven  
Our former sins erased?  
Shall the truth of Easter morning  
Change our hearts desire?  
Teach us different ways of living –  
Compassion caught on fire?

From *The Resurrection* – Music by Simon McEnery, Text by Jeremy Davies 2007