

Matt 28 & 1 Cor 12 – Annual Review Sunday April 28th 2019

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Time for change, time for challenge, the great commission of Christ

This morning I want to talk about the need to fulfil the great commission **to evangelise**, the **environment** and the need to work together **ecumenically**, as we have been doing.

We are facing globally and as a nation and as a church a time of change and challenge. Brexit is still undecided, the plotting, the protests seem to just carry on, God only knows where we will be in a few weeks time!

Firstly let us remember the need to be evangelical, to be proud of our evangelical heritage.

At my first PCC, over five years ago here in the vestry, I mentioned the **great commission** given by Jesus to the 11 disciples on a mountain in Galilee. **To go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit.** Interestingly at our **Wednesday morning prayer meeting**, we had the same passage. Libby Lane the Bishop of Stockport to the diocese of Chester, who you may remember back in 2015 was consecrated as the Church of England's **first** woman bishop, reflected on this passage saying that the disciples are to embark on a greater more difficult task – the evangelisation of the world. This of course is not a short-term healing mission project like the one that Joshua and I went on to India, mentioned in the annual report. Instead this is to last until the very end of time itself. This is our calling as disciples of Christ and of course it is a challenge for the church, as well as us as individual Christians to be on mission. The resurrection of Christ which we celebrated last Sunday has transformed the Christ mission from a local matter, into a global movement transcending all differences of culture. Libby Lane went on to say this perpetual mission can be summed up using the very same words that I used on page 1 of the annual report, namely the five marks of mission. To remind us they are:-

- i) Proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, including teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers,
- ii) responding to human need in loving service,
- iii) transforming unjust structures of society,

- iv) challenging violence of every kind and pursuing peace and reconciliation, as well as
- v) safeguarding the integrity of creation and sustaining and renewing the life of the earth.

When I look at the annual report, I am pleased that in many different ways we have been very missional in our work here at All Saints, of course there is more to do. I am excited and encouraged by new homegroups and prayer groups being formed in the past year and in recent months, as well as people joining our Church.

But when I see all that has been done, I remind myself of the baptisms, funerals, weddings, activities, large and small whether they are courses that we have run as a church or small acts of kindness and love. They are of course, not for our own benefit but to reach out to both new and old Christians, as well as those who don't know Jesus yet. To embrace people at key moments in their lives, be they celebrations of new birth, a time to thank God for the safe arrival of their loved ones. Or funerals, often now called services of thanksgiving, as people give thanks for the lives of their loved ones. As they are comforted in their grief, as they reflect on their own lives. At these points and in our Christian lives we are to be faithful witnesses and **evangelise**.

Secondly we are to be **engaged environmentalists**.

But we are in a time of change and challenge, as the old ways of doing things and new ways clash not just globally but also as a nation and also as a Church.

I think this is shown for example in the debate over climate change, highlighted in programme like David Attenborough's film *Climate Change – the facts* or the Blue Planet series. In it David recently described climate change "as our greatest threat in 1,000's of years. With greater storms, greater floods and sea-level rises (20 cms in the last 100 years), with ice melting faster and urgent action being needed. We are running out of time but there is still hope. 20 of the last warmest years have occurred in the last 20 years. We are the Lord's creatures and the trustees of this planet. Whether you agree with the actions of Extinction Rebellion or not our way of life is changing the world. In one clip from the film there was a father and son driving through a frightening wildfire – crying out to Jesus to save them and protect them. But I have possibly like many of you been particularly struck by bravery and determination of 16 year old **Greta Thornburg, who started missing school on Fridays to protest**

outside the Swedish parliament in her desire to see change a desire to see policies altered, to stand up and get politicians to notice. As she said change is coming whether you like it or not.

I don't think it's any coincidence that Britain's largest money manager, Legal and General, with over 1 trillion of the UK pension funds investments, where some of you like me might have some of your pensions, stated that the world is facing a climate catastrophe. L & G has now place climate change at the top of its list of corporate governance concerns.

This issue of climate change is not going away. But a bit like the call to evangelism that I mentioned earlier, it is all our responsibility.

How might we respond as a church? How might we do our bit to safeguard creation?

Here are a couple of suggestions, firstly we could progress the memorial garden project setting aside a space for reflection and the environment to flourish in our cemetery, as part of our commitment to enhancing the wildlife, biodiversity and beauty of this particular part of God's creation.

Secondly we could, like many of the churches in the Salisbury diocese commit to being an eco-church, through the AROCHA scheme, like many other Churches in the Diocese.

Thirdly we all have a personal responsibility to lead our lives in a more sustainable way be it refusing plastic bags, picking up litter or not having plastic straws [what's the point of them anyway?]

So we can be committed as a church to evangelism and environmentalism.

Thirdly we can work in an **ecumenical** way, alongside other churches who are happy to share our values, working together for the greater good.

It's great that new people have joined our church in recent months, I love the strength and depth of people's different church backgrounds and spiritualities. In my view the breadth and depth of our spirituality, the wide variety of services, both in style and content is something to be celebrated, to give thanks for. We are a Church that, as well as doing Alpha, seek to embrace all ages and stages of faith from babies to people in their 90's...

We have as a church continued to work with St Swithun's Bournemouth, re-branded as love church, in promoting and working together the bereavement journey courses and marriage preparation courses, some of whom were unchurched.

In addition several of us have been into Lilliput school as well as St Edwards, to deliver assemblies, which whilst in the ecclesiastical parishes of Holy Angels and St George's, Oakdale, have been well received and our help is always welcomed, both by other churches, teachers and pupils.

Some of you might be thinking what can I do? I don't have or haven't been involved in some of the things you have said.

But as it clearly says in 1 Corinthians 12.... *The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one spirit into one body.*

As it says earlier in the chapter that we have just had read " There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. – [1 Corinthians 12:4-5](#)

whether we have the gift of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues interpretation of tongues or indeed administration, giving, serving, whatever we have we must use it to God's glory. Not in our own strength. But these gifts are to build up the church and that is what we are here to do. To build the kingdom here on earth and each one of us has a role to play whether large or small, upfront or behind the stage. The church is only as good as the people in it.

The other reason I chose this particular passage for today were verses 25 and 26 so there should be no division in the body, but it's part should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

When we have seen in the past week, on Easter Sunday, the church in Sri Lanka, being attacked and bombed by militant Islamist groups, leading to children as well as adults dying. My heart bleeds At a prayer meeting in the past week I literally cried. Of course we know the forces of evil are always out there, as well as sometimes in our own hearts but let us remember who the enemy is. Retaliation is not the answer, apparently the attack was in response to what happened to the Muslim community in Christchurch. We know that tit for tat, an eye for an eye, is

not what Jesus teaches, revenge through violence is not what the Christian message is all about, instead we are to promote Christ's message through love, through reaching out to the bereaved, the lonely, the lost, to embrace those who are different from us.

If we are to be a Church that grows in the next year and All Saints and elsewhere, we must remember our evangelical routes, from the early disciples

The power of prayer

To be reconcilers

That love triumphs over hate

To be people who forgive quickly

To be people who work together, ecumenically

To be responsible stewards of our creation

To realise our good fortune and relative privilege

To be proud of the message that Jesus gave us

To go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen