

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM OF CHURCHES



The Church's prayer for Sunday 13th June

Teach

Lord Jesus Christ, you called your disciples,
Baptised them, and encouraged them along the way.
Grant us clarity in our teaching, Openness in our learning,
And commitment in our responding to your call.

Bible readings and reflection for Sunday 13th June

A New Testament reading from Ephesians 4:1-13

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said,

"When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;
he gave gifts to his people."

(When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended^a into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

A Gospel reading from the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

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Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

A reflection from Revd Paul Garnell, Lordsbridge Team Curate

Second mark of mission: Teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

Last week, Jane Mclarty in the opening part of her reflection on the first mark of mission to ‘proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom’, described a situation I recall very well from during my time on ceremonial duties in central London. A street preacher bellowing familiar lines from the bible – often to do with a lot of repentance, a good helping of forgiveness, and a sprinkling of love. The location many of you will have heard of, perhaps visited and less likely been one of them...stood on a box proclaiming whatever it is you want a crowd of folk to listen to. The place is called ‘Speaker’s Corner’ in Hyde Park. It was on the route I would often take whilst exercising the horses, be that a charger or the two great Clydesdale Drum Horses’, Horatius and Constantine – riding one whilst leading the other. As with all notable places in London there is a back story. In this instance a rather macabre one...not far from speaker’s corner was the infamous Tyburn Gallows or Tyburn Tree, where many a petty and hardened crook was executed by hanging. One such character of notoriety who met his end there was Jack Shepherd and from whom we get the naughty boy phrase, ‘Jack the lad’. A hero villain with an aptitude for escaping prison – four times in all. As with those before and after him, condemned to die, they were given the opportunity to make a final speech. Likely in the hope they would confess their wrongdoing and reduce their purgatorial sentence by a little less than eternity! Hence, ‘Speaker’s Corner’.

Now the reason for my providing you with such an introduction is because I want you to remember the content. And this is mostly achieved through story telling. I am fairly confident to make the claim that a number of you after reading or hearing this will go off to look-up Jack Shepherd and/or Speaker’s Corner. I know I would. It is an interesting snippet of information – just enough to intrigue your imagination that you will want to learn more. And this is essentially the role of a teacher; to pass on, to impart, to share information.

Teaching the faith and the making of disciples is an integral component of our witness as Christians. Firstly, as successors of the apostles and saints who have gone before us, we too are called to teach, baptise and nurture new believers – to inspire those across the generations, the young, middle-agers and golden-agers using the spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:11) given us for the building up of the body of Christ.

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Secondly, how did we get to this point if it wasn't for our parent(s), a family member, friend, teacher or colleague who encouraged us to take that first step and perhaps continue to support, to journey alongside us with the Holy Spirit through the trials and tribulations of life.

Now, of course, for those of you familiar with the tradition of the Church, the general understanding is that bishops, priests, and deacons are set apart – called and ordained to fulfil the Great Commission of Jesus as described in Matt 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:48 and Luke's sequel Acts 1:8, and John 20:21. It is their responsibility to plod the beat on their respective patches, to be visible and generous people of Jesus Christ – after all, that is part of the job description – the teaching and the nurturing of new believers, and especially the sacramental nature of baptism. And you are not necessarily wrong in thinking, assuming or expecting this. However, now is my and your opportunity to adopt a change of mindset... and it is a rather serious one for the future life of the church, for we can no longer just carry on as we have done for however long - explaining away our reluctance and shyness in proclaiming the good news under the cultural caveat that it is not the British way. Our Christian faith and witness to others should be treated as importantly as we would a remedy for ours or someone else's physical health and wellbeing. A former Padre of mine in the British Army on hearing the Garrison Sergeant Major, the late Perry Mason, bellow "drill is a pill that should be taken three times daily!" retorted, "as with prayer, the eucharist and bible teaching – Garrison Sergeant Major, Sir!" A light-hearted anecdote but the sentiment stands.

It is in this being fed that we can in turn feed others. Most of us when we hear the word teach or teacher may associate these words understandably with professional accreditation and so feel unqualified or under-qualified to teach the faith to others. And this is why story telling is a crucial tool we can all deploy from our mission bag – no professional qualification required. It was one method Jesus himself used to make truths memorable. He turned them into stories.

Teach through stories. Your story of faith.

Some time back now, Alison and I committed a number of Sundays to exploring 'Frontline Sundays' a resource provided by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity or LICC for short, to encourage all of us to think about each day as a mission opportunity. It was the first time I had ever come across their material and was really impressed and convinced by what they were saying. The 6 percent of people in the UK who go to church each month is a small but significant number when scattered Monday through to Saturday on their various 'frontlines'. Places of work, at the school gate, community groups, at the gym and so on. With this

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perspective in mind, we could begin to think about where our frontlines are each week and what opportunities they could present for sharing the Christian faith with family, friends, or colleagues.

And now as many of us return to work, social events – interacting once again, let us take these occasions to tell our stories, share our experiences of faith and pray for those we encounter will come to know the living God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So, your mission should you choose to accept it... learn, tell, teach. And remember:

Just as the Father sent me,

so I'm sending you out to be

my witnesses throughout the world,

the whole world

Don't worry what you have to say,

don't worry because on that day

God's Spirit will speak in your heart,

will speak in your heart.

Prayer

Lord, Jesus Christ, you called your disciples,

Baptised them and encouraged them along the way.

Grant us clarity in our teaching,

openness in our learning

and commitment in our responding to your call.

Amen

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