

**A sermon preached at St Andrew's Church, Soham on the Feast of Pentecost 2019
by the Revd Eleanor Whalley, Vicar. Acts 2: 1-21; John 14: 8-17; 25-27**

May I speak and may we hear in the name of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I wonder if we might just take a moment to look around us and take it all in...

I dropped in here at about 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon.

There was no one else here, unless you count Belle,

though had I arrived a bit later,

I'd've met the sacristans setting up for this morning;

I might've heard Peter practising the organ,

I might have sighted a flower-arranger.

As it was, a lot of people had beaten me to it:

the bunting had been put up;

the floor had been vacuumed;

the altar frontal had been changed to red;

those lovely red flowers had been put around the base of the Pascal candle;

the Easter prayer cards – the laminated posters around the church - had been replaced with those for Pentecost;

and Bibles had been opened and set on the Easter Sepulchre in the children's corner.

Everything was ready for this morning.

The life of a church community, I would say –

the life of this church community –

is a living demonstration,

a daily re-enactment,

of the miracle of Pentecost.

Divided tongues, different gifts, all sorts of people,

all coming together.

We are all drawn together –

and together we combine our efforts,

we pool our resources –

whatever our resources may be –

all to the glory and praise of God.

Something similar happened last weekend.

Last Sunday, you'll remember, we commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Soham train explosion.

Last Saturday morning, a few hours before our third wedding here in 8 days,

I realised, to my horror, that quite a lot of things had not been put in place that needed to be in place.

That was absolutely not the fault of anyone here.

It was just a case of not dotting all the organisational i-s and not crossing all the organisational t-s

on the part of those of us who thought we'd planned it.

Given the amount of coverage we'd had on Radio Cambridgeshire

both on the Friday before and on the Sunday morning;

and given the notifications in the press, and on social media,

it suddenly looked possible that there might be quite a lot of people turning up for the 1.30 Act of Remembrance.

On the one hand, of course, that was exactly what we wanted,

but on the other hand, I wasn't at all sure we were ready for them.

In my panic – and panic it was

(I hadn't taken to heart the 'my peace I give to you, my own peace I leave with you' of today's Gospel reading)

and all the while trying to hold the names of the wedding couple I was about to marry in my head,

and at the crack of dawn, I emailed our friends in Soham Heritage and Tourism and in the Royal British Legion.

I asked them if they might be willing to jump into the breach and act as marshals for the crowds arriving for 1.30.

I spoke to Alison Palmer, in the hope of getting hold of James – James was at the airport, trying to get to Madrid,

but he very kindly rang me back, from his seat at the airport, and he gave me some reassurance and advice.

Thanks to him, I spoke next to Bill Hunt, Vice Chair of Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Department –

all this was on a Saturday morning, remember,

but Bill really couldn't've been nicer about me interrupting his weekend,

even though these were things I or someone else

should really have spoken to him about months ago.

Next I spoke to Josh Schumann, one of our local Councillors,

and Josh got hold of umpteen high vis vests from Kim Botting,

courtesy of Soham Benevolent Association.

Finally I telephoned Geoff Fisher,

and I threw everything remaining onto his more than capable shoulders.

So it was that by 11 o'clock last Saturday morning,
we'd moved from being in a state of near total unpreparedness to what, when it came to it on Sunday at 1.30,
looked like an operation so organised you'd've thought we'd been planning it for months.
All with a little help from our friends.

And that's my point:

it was the same as we see here:
collaboration between very different people,
but people willing to working together,
willing to form a team and help one another out,
people united in their commitment to achieving a shared goal.

What I love in that reading from Acts

is the jumble of it all.

All those different languages going off at once,
people making so much racket
that other people outside the house think that those inside are drunk.

It is the most enormous hurly burly – an absolute holy jumble.

And from that hurly burly – from that gathering

the disciples are sent out.

Jesus had told them to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit came,
but then he'd told them to go out, out into the world.

And we mirror that movement

every Sunday morning.

We meet at church, and then we're sent out –

'Go in peace,' says the Deacon, 'to love and serve the Lord'.

The Deacon – today it's John – speaks in the name of Christ.

The Deacon sends us out in Christ's name,

to spend the next six days in the world.

And our attitude to those six days is really important.

The word mission comes from Latin.

It's a Latin word that means sending out - *missionem*.

Whoever we are,
we are missionaries.
people God sends out –
sends out to do God's work;
and to live God's life in the world.

We whom God has fuelled with the Spirit

Whether we operate from an office or from an armchair;
whether our days are spent doing business deals or making phone calls to a friends – watching the telly -
what we do matters in the grand scheme of things;
how we live matters in the grand scheme of things,
however insignificant our lives and our actions may seem.

We are called as Christians to work and to live and to pray alongside others.

We're called as Christians to engage with others
in the muddle and the jumble of everyday life.

We're called to take God's life to the world.

We're called to share God's Spirit in the world.

We're called to find God in the world;

and we're called to welcome God there.

I'm going to read a prayer by Bishop John V Taylor.

You might like to pray it with me.

Lord Jesus Christ,
alive and at large in the world,
help me to find and follow you there today,
in the places where I work, meet people, spend money and make plans.
Take me as a disciple of your kingdom,
to see through your eyes,
and hear the questions you are asking,
to welcome all people with your trust and truth,
and to change the things that contradict God's love
by the power of the cross and the freedom of the Spirit.
Amen.