



**The Anglican Diocese of Adelaide  
The Most Reverend Jeffrey Driver  
Archbishop of Adelaide**

**Ordination Service Sermon  
The Cathedral Church of St Peter, North Adelaide  
Saturday 16 December 2006**

**SUNDAY CHURCH IN PALESTINE**

*Sunday Church in Palestine.*

There were not many attending; just 12 in fact.

But that was an increase.

The service registers show that last time they met there were only eleven.

Thomas had been elsewhere.

*Sunday Church in Palestine.*

What kind of advertisement might this new church on the block put in the Saturday paper to attract new members?

What sort of slogan should they put on their signboard?

“A friendly church - all welcome”?

Hardly. Locked doors are not a sign of hospitality.

“The church with a warm heart and a bold mission”?

Forget it. This is the church of sweaty palms and shaky knees.

It is the disciples of Jesus gathered after his resurrection.

And look at them!

For long, painstaking chapters in John's Gospel,

Jesus has been preparing his disciples for his departure.

He has gone over and over his commandments to love one another, to be bold, to trust, to be ready to follow him at all costs.

Somebody was not paying attention.

So we find them, shut away and shaken, behind closed, bolted doors.  
They were to be the ones walking confidently out into the world,  
full of the Holy Spirit, announcing the resurrection triumph of God.

Here they are hiding away,  
hoping that nobody in town will know where they are.

Here is the Church, scarred, disheartened, and defensive.  
Here is the Church we often belong to.

Not only is there no welcome, no open doors,  
this is a church with no strategic plan,  
no mission statement, and no envelope scheme!

*Here is Church feeling afraid and as if the world is against it.*

Here are the walls of defensiveness,  
doors bolted against what might happen,  
here are the disciples at their most inadequate.

So here is the Church we sometimes belong to;  
apprehensive, defensive and more than a little afraid;  
here is a church with absolutely nothing going for it,  
except that  
except that...

Except that when it gathered,  
the risen Christ pushed through the locked doors,  
threw back the bolt, and stood among them!

We are church, not because of our talents or confidence,  
our mission statements, talented leaders, or strategic plans,  
not even because of our excellent preaching and liturgical polish,  
though all of these things might cause a bishop's heart to strangely  
warm!

But we are the church because to us,  
even to us, he has come.  
Through our walls our bolted doors,  
he has come,  
and given us his gifts of Spirit, forgiveness and mission,  
calling us to share his love for the world.

That's why we dare to call ourselves church.

If we look for the church as it might be,  
or as we might want it, whether in the pages of Scripture,  
or in the church of today, then we will probably look in vain,  
for there is no pure church, strong, chaste unsullied and holy,  
perfect beyond reproach and shadow.

Always it is like the refrain in Benjamin's Britten's *Noah's Floode*,  
making us say *Alleluia* and *Kyrie Eleison* in the same breath.

And the lofty prose of Ephesians we heard read today,  
elevating the Church as the household of God,  
with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone,  
is matched with John's humbling picture of a frightened twelve.

*Here is the Church we often belong to.*

It is glory and fragility.  
It is the call to holiness, yet the reality of brokenness  
It is the expectation of saints and the reality of sinners.

But we are the Church.  
We are church because to us,  
even to us, he has come.  
through the walls of our fears,  
through the doors of defensiveness,  
through the barriers of institutional malaise,  
he has come and comes with his Word of Peace.

*Jenny Wilson*, Mother, wife, teacher, musician  
*Mike Russell*, growing up in Adelaide,  
finding life-changing faith in Sydney and returning to us.  
*Sam Bleby*, with deep links within this diocese,  
journeying through legal training and the mission field to this day.  
*Barbara Messner*, teacher, singer, writer.  
*Tracey Gracey*, from Sunday school teacher at Bridgewater, to  
Africa pilgrim  
and to this day and this moment.

Your journeys in life have brought you to us.  
Your gifts and experience are part of this day.

But you stand here today,  
not because of your experience and gifts,  
nor indeed, in spite of your failings,

but because the Christ has come to you, even to you he has come,  
as he came to those disciples so long ago,  
surprising, confronting, comforting and calling,  
and in this service today we hear those disturbing words once more  
*"As the Father sent me, so I send you"*.

There are many things I might properly say about this great call.  
There are many things that will be said through our liturgy today,  
about this call that you are to embrace within the People of God.

You are called to serve the Gospel by encouraging the church to live  
in the Pentecost vision of the Kingdom of God, a vision in which all  
people can find their place.

You are called to serve the Gospel in a culture that flits from god to  
god in orgies of self-indulgence.

You are called to serve the Gospel in a church struggling with its  
place in the world and its own capacity to change

You are called to serve the Gospel in a country and a world in which  
the gap between rich and poor is growing exponentially.

Indeed, there is much that might be said about this call to ministry in  
our times.

But, Mike, Jenny, Barbara. Tracey and Sam,  
this is what *must* be said:

You are called to this ministry by our Lord Jesus Christ  
who comes to you through the walls of your fear,  
who enters the spaces of your inadequacy,  
who is present in the moments of your unbelief,  
and in the recesses of your darkness,  
and who bids you to touch his wounded side,  
calling you to a service which at the same  
time is your self realisation.

A man called Richard McKenna once wrote these words:

*In the end, priests have nothing to offer anyone,  
except their reality, the pain of their search, their struggle for  
growth and realisation, their courage and hope in staying true  
to the turmoil of their souls ....their wrestling with God.*

Here is your strength. Here is your challenge.

Here is the validity of what you can offer.  
Here is the comfort you will need as you go on.

It is Christ who has come to you when the doors were locked,  
and who has called you to touch his side with the finger of your life,  
and now to go in his sending.

Beyond this, nothing else is required,  
but in this all is demanded,  
every good gift, every fibre of being,  
every highest aspiration and depth of passion,  
all you have ... all you are.

We are the church because to us,  
even to us, he has come, and comes till,  
through our walls of fear,  
through our bolted doors, with his disturbing peace,  
and blessed are we if we dare to see  
and blessed are we if we dare to believe.

Even so, Come Lord Jesus!