

Though we are Many: The Ministry of the Whole People of God

Thank you for inviting me – and a particular thank you to Dick Williams for sending me a copy of his biography on Stuart Blanch.

It has been good over these past few weeks to read much of that biography and gain a little window onto Blanch's life. I was delighted to discover little snippets in his biography that just brushed places of my own story.

Blanch was born in the Forest of Dean at Viney Hill which is actually in the Diocese of Gloucester. He trained for ordination at Wycliffe, but long before me - and Lee Abbey in Devon was clearly a significant place of encounter with God for both him and his wife. So too for me.

So, a few little connections - and indeed that word 'connection' is key to what I will be speaking about over the next half hour or so.

In the first letter of Peter he reminds his readers that followers of Christ have been called out of darkness into his marvellous light. "Once you were not a people, but now you are **God's** people" - (1 Peter 2:9-10). I want to reflect on our ministry as the people of God.

Technically the whole people of God actually includes every person on this planet – all people created in the image of God - and so the baptised followers of Jesus Christ have been given a commission to "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...*" (Matt 28:19). As followers of Jesus Christ we can never be the *whole* people of God whilst there are people not reconciled to God.

So perhaps more correctly my title should be 'The ministry of the people of God *for* the *whole* people of God.'

My actual title this evening is: **Though we are Many: The Ministry of the Whole People of God.**

I'm going to start by talking about (a) **connection & God's mission of transformation**; then (b) the **meaning of ministry**; then say something about (c) the **Kingdom participation of every baptised follower of Jesus Christ Sunday to Saturday**; and end by saying a little about (d) **conflict**.

So my first main heading:

(a) Connection and God's mission of transformation:

I wonder if anyone has ever said to you "Thank you - it wouldn't have been the same without you." It's one of those great phrases which can sound so complimentary when actually it's simply a statement of truth. Whether the event turned out to be a

roaring success or a complete disaster, the fact is that if any of those people present had not been there then that event would have been different...

...Each of us is unique and every conversation, encounter or event is shaped by each person present.

Many years ago when I was working as a speech and language therapist I began to be interested in systemic theory as I began to explore the field of family therapy.

I began to see more fully how people are connected to one another and live within networks of relationship. When you are working with a child who is struggling with communication for any reason, the behaviour of those in relationship with that child will affect that child's behaviour and communication, and vice versa.

Systemic theory aims to look at the big picture - what is going on within the system of relationships and not simply focusing on one person...

I often use the child's mobile as an illustration: imagine a mobile hanging above a cot with four or five different figures. Each one rotates on its own and is seemingly independent of the others, but if you pull one figure, all the others move as well.

Of course, there is nothing new about systemic theory. The Apostle Paul talks about it when he refers to the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians ch.12. Paul was naming the reality of diverse followers of Jesus Christ being connected and interdependent with Christ at the head: *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"*

"Though we are many we are one body."

Followers of Jesus Christ of every age, denomination, social background and nationality are connected; and each of us has a role to play in this thing called ministry. We are the people of God.

And yet so is *every* human being, whether or not they know it.

Every human being is unique and made in God's image. In terms of connectedness, relationship is at the heart of who God is - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And every human being is created to live in relationship with God, with neighbour and with the created world.

Yet, as we know, from the very beginning human beings have chosen not to live in relationship. Humanity is broken and flawed – In conflict with God and with one another.

Amazingly, God is love and God is on a mission and it's one of restored relationship and transformation.

It's summed up in Paul's letter to the Colossians: *"Through Christ, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross"* (Colossians 1:20). It's about **reconnection** with God.

My pectoral cross was a gift from the Bishop of Lebombo in Mozambique. It is made from shell cases of bullets from the civil war and came from a project called 'Swords into Ploughshares.' Some of you may have seen the Throne of Weapons in the British Museum which comes from that project. Guns and knives and other bits of weaponry are transformed into beautiful works of art and powerful symbols of peace.

For me this cross is a symbol of the transforming and reconnecting work of God.

One day there will be no more pain, no more tears, no more dying. One day all will be brought to completion and God's kingdom will be fully here. We will be fully who we are: Our 'becoming' will be complete and we will be God's people dwelling in unity with God forever - a place of shalom (Revelation 21:1-4). True connection.

One day, says Paul in his letter to the Romans, "*creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God*". (Romans 8; 21). But all this is not simply about a *future* hope. These words also describe our calling now as those reconciled to God, to join in with God's mission of freedom and transformation in the present - To work for the flourishing of God's people – ALL people - and the flourishing of the whole of creation.

Many of you will be familiar with the Latin phrase 'missio dei' – the mission of God. David Bosch, a 20th century theologian says: '*The missio dei is God's activity, which embraces both the Church and the world, and in which the Church may be privileged to participate.*' (Bosch, Transforming Mission, p. 391).

For those of you familiar with the Church of England's programme of Renewal and Reform it's important not to see it primarily as being about saving The Church of England – It's about refocusing our hearts and minds on our God who in Christ has saved the world and is reconciling the world to himself. It's about renewing our commitment to faithfully join in as the people of God – To connect with what God is doing:

'The missio dei is God's activity, which embraces both the Church and the world, and in which the Church may be privileged to participate.'

I love the Anglican commitment here in Liverpool to be a **Bigger Church** making a **Bigger Difference**. That will surely involve ever greater **connection** with God and others...

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So I've said something about **connection & God's mission of transformation**. Let me now say something about

(b) The **meaning of ministry**:

I confess that with hindsight I do wish I had asked for a slight change in title as I'm not sure I want to wade into the territory of the definition of ministry. What I really

want to focus on is the calling of every baptised follower of Jesus Christ to participate in God's mission and join in with what God is doing.

Having been out of the country for nearly 3 weeks I'm a bit out of the loop and it was only two days ago after writing this talk that I found an article in the Church Times which is related to this issue (14/1016). It was precipitated by a report from the Church of England's Lay Leadership Task Group which will be made public in due course. From reading the CT article I suspect the report will be saying much of what I'm wanting to highlight this evening!

The Church continues to struggle with how to articulate a picture of ministry which is about both ordained and lay people. Contrary to common opinion, we are *all* laity – people. We also struggle to articulate a picture of ministry which doesn't simply focus on all the activity around what I call 'doing church', usually on a Sunday and which often involves a rota...and sometimes can fall into the trap of seemingly keeping the same wheels turning without being clear about its Kingdom focus.

One of the strands of the Church of England's programme of Renewal and Reform is 'Renewing Discipleship and Ministry' and there is a working group looking at lay *ministry*. This is primarily focused on current and emerging forms of licensed and authorised ministries and what this might look like across the Church of England in the future. But unsurprisingly the task group focusing on lay *leadership* has also emerged. This group is placing a greater focus on the area of whole life discipleship. According to the Church Times article it also looks as if the group is placing a strong emphasis on the importance of clergy and laity being seen as equal partners (although it's rather worrying that this needs to be stated!).

For me, all this reflects something of the Church's struggle with defining what we mean by the *ministry* of the whole people of God. Personally I think we may be in danger of being too prescriptive and over bounded.

In preparing for this talk, and in the absence of the final reports from the current task groups, I discovered a report from 2007 produced by what was then called the Faith and Order Advisory Group under the chair of Bishop John Hind. The report is entitled *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*.

The report draws the distinction between ministry and discipleship – something we are still grappling with in our Renewal and Reform programme.

Every follower of Christ is called to be a disciple and the Spirit gives gifts to everyone. However, ministry is seen as a specific task for which someone is commissioned. Ministry is seen as not being individualistic ('my ministry') but rather something to which the Church calls people and which is undertaken on behalf of the Church.

The report concludes that ministry "*refers to specific God-given work for the kingdom of God, work that is assigned or acknowledged by the Church.*" (Chapter 4 'Towards a theology of mission and ministry, ordained and lay' p.118) and it goes on to say that the word 'ministry' should be used for "*actions that are acknowledged, expected or mandated*

by the church, actions that have a public dimension and are subject to some kind of accountability and oversight.” (p.115)

This obviously describes ordained ministry. It also describes the licensed lay ministry of Readers, Church Army officers and Accredited Lay Workers. It also would include all the ministries which are authorised or commissioned at diocesan or local level – and at present there is a variety of practice from diocese to diocese.

In my experience, clergy and lay leaders in churches are often trying to identify people to take on the ‘doing church’ roles. People who can be trained and equipped (and even commissioned) for the ministry of word and sacrament and pastoral care often revolving around Sundays.

I can recall more than one occasion when I was a vicar, having a conversation with a relatively young newcomer to church and finding my mind running ahead as I wondered if they might be good at working with children or be a potential church warden...

Now please don’t hear me knocking the importance of ministry regarding Word, sacrament and pastoral care. As the people of God we need the ministry of the intercessors, the preachers, the worship leaders, the children’s workers, the pastoral assistants, the Eucharistic ministers, the prayer ministers, the readers of scripture etc: All of this is about building up the people of God; enabling us to glorify God in our worship; receive God’s word; be fed in the Eucharist; and care and pray for each other. And we do need to ensure that those who are exercising these ministries are called, equipped and supported.

But what about the ministry of the people of God among the *whole* people of God - those people who are created by God but who have not yet been reconciled to God? How about our participation in God’s work of transformation among the people and places of our week? How about our calling as the people of God to be salt and light in our society and the wider world?

We can spend a long time discussing what is ministry and what is discipleship and what is or isn’t leadership, but what ultimately matters is how we as God’s people *are* joining in with what God is doing Monday to Sunday.

And those words of ‘joining in’ are important. After all, God is already present in the places of our week through the work of the Holy Spirit. (*‘God was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him’*. John 1:10).

The Church is not God’s *only* involvement in the world (and I’m not sure how good we always are at hearing God’s prophetic voice in the world around us) - but amazingly God chooses to be at work through the Church.

If we reshape our lens to focus on what it means to **be** Church, we can still hold on to the concept of ‘ministry’ being about work for the Kingdom which is commissioned by the Church, but the canvas might be broader and we might be less focused on activity which is most closely related to all the *doing church* when we gather together for worship or learning.

So this brings me to

**(c) The Kingdom participation of every baptised follower of Jesus Christ
Sunday to Saturday**

What might transformation look like Sunday to Saturday if every baptised follower of Jesus Christ dared to truly grasp hold of the truth that we have been drowned in the deep waters of baptism and have been raised with Christ from the waters of death, and are called to be and share that good news with other people?

In Gloucester I am frequently talking about how we trail the wet footprints of our baptism. The concept is not mine. It comes from a 21st-century theologian called Michael Jenkins. Writing about Christian baptism he says: *“we are soaked to the skin in the death of Christ. Our union with Christ drips from us.... We trail wet footprints of this drenching wherever we go; we never dry off”* (The Church Faces Death p.23)

One of my great hopes and prayers is that together as the people of God we might learn more about encouraging and challenging one another to trail the waters of our baptism every day of our lives and to believe and pray that those baptismal footprints will be transforming.

Yes, it's about people having the confidence to talk openly about their faith; it's about how the fruits of the spirit are evident in all our relationships; it's about the way we go about things in all the different places of our week and how we engage with the issues around us, not least issues of injustice in the wider world...

But this is not about discipleship being an activity. It is about who we are.

This is not about some slavish obedience to be 'good' people – It is about being filled with the Holy Spirit day by day so that we truly are Easter people. This is not about a song of alleluia only being sung when life is going well, or when we're 'doing' church, but a song of alleluia being *lived* every day even amidst pain and struggle.

It might be living the song of joy in a school playground or living a song of lament by a hospital bedside. It is about life which is rooted in the hope of Christ, the power of the resurrection and a hope yet to come. It is a life which clings to the love of God, receives it and shares it in who we are and who we are becoming.

When I was in the Diocese of London I championed an initiative entitled 'Ambassadors for Christ'. This was founded on those verse from 2 Corinthians ch.5 which follow on from the description of God's active mission: The world being reconciled to God through Christ, and us as followers of Christ being entrusted with the message of reconciliation. Therefore, says Paul, *“We are ambassadors for Christ”*

The aim of the initiative was, and is, to equip and intentionally commission people to live out their Christian faith among the people and places of their daily lives.

And note this is not so-called workplace ministry – although it includes that. It's about everyday discipleship, whether or not someone is in paid employment. This is about parents, carers, the unemployed, the retired, the housebound, the child at school, the professional in the workplace.... This is about the people of God.

It's true that many of those being commissioned as London ambassadors would not tick the box of 'ministry' as defined in the 2007 report I highlighted earlier. The majority of the commissioned London ambassadors are *self-identifying* in terms of their calling and certainly I was aware of those who were not sure that where and how they were spending their week was necessarily about vocation. Many people in places of struggle would wish that their lives were being lived elsewhere and with different people. And yet being commissioned as an ambassador was and is about encouraging people to grow in faith and live out that faith wherever they find themselves.

For me it links in with the commitment here in the Diocese of Liverpool to support people to be 'difference makers' – I think that's a great expression! And it gets us away from all the haggling over traditional terminology.

But in this focus on being whole life disciples is there something we need to be saying about ministry which has a wider perspective than our usual one?

I want to suggest that as a Church we might be challenged to recognise more of what we are calling *discipleship* as also being the *ministry* of the people of God out in God's world Sunday to Saturday - and that might well mean more creative commissioning of *some* people and acknowledging a far greater range of transformational work being done on behalf of the Church: ministry which is about **being** church rather than **doing** church.

For example, if we have Christian Heads of church schools who have been called to share the good news of Christ through their work, and join in with God's work of transformation - and even nurture the lived out Christian faith of Christian teachers in that school – might we commission them for ministry on behalf of the *whole* Church?

Or how about the parent who knows themselves called to be actively involved in the running of the local children's football team – a place to live out their faith - and who takes God-given opportunities to speak of Jesus Christ, and who possibly builds up faith in other parents on the fringe of the church. Is this a ministry to which the *Church* might call them and indeed commission them?

How about the elderly person in the residential home who shares the love and hope of Jesus with staff and other residents and even enables people to grow in faith?

Are we listening to the different roles people undertake in the week and seeking to discern if this is actually a *ministry* which is or could be done on behalf of the church and for which that person might be commissioned and supported, and even be accountable, as they actively seek to serve God and share Christ's good news through who they are and what they do?

Just as we are called to have our ears and eyes open to those who might have a vocation to ordained minister or Reader ministry or some other form of lay leadership, are we identifying ministry opportunities in our wider communities and praying for discernment about who might be called to be involved in different places and with different issues and events on *behalf of the Church*; possibly even nurturing faith in other Christians in that same sphere of activity? i.e. this would be about the *Church* doing the calling and the commissioning.

Well, we could discuss the perhaps less-than-neat boundary between discipleship and ministry for some time but to be perfectly honest, I'm not too fussed!

What most matters to me is that every member of the Body of Christ is encouraged and challenged to give glory to God; to open our hearts yet wider to the love of God in Christ and to bless others in Christ's name so that the transforming work of God can be seen and experienced as we continually pray for God's Kingdom to come on earth as in heaven – And in all that we pray for others to discover the life of Christ for themselves.

So rather than get too hung up on terminology of *ministry* versus *disciple* let us stay focused on *being* the whole people of God.

At the end of the Anglican liturgy for the Eucharist there is a prayer of sending out.

One of the prayers echoes the beginning of Romans 12 as we offer God our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice. We pray that we would be sent out in the power of the Spirit to live and work to God's praise and glory. The alternative prayer asks that we who share Christ's body live his risen life and we who drink his cup bring life to others and we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. And we pray that we would stay firm in the hope God has set before us so that we and all God's children shall be free and the whole earth live to praise God's name.

These prayers need time and space. Too often they trip off the tongue as we begin to think about the pending coffee after the service. But these prayers are a serious commitment and in praying these words we should be lighting a fire which has the potential to become a huge blaze of transformation in the week ahead... (Not quite sure that's the right metaphor set alongside my image of trailing wet footprints!)...

In the Anglican liturgy these prayers lead into the final dismissal: "*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*" Go and be salt and light among the people and places of your week...

At confirmation services and at licensings I am currently focusing on that act of sending out. I think there's far more that we could do in our gathering together in worship which would more deeply acknowledge us as the people of God who are being sent out.

Some of you may be familiar with the work of the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity. In London I worked closely with them to shape a pilot project with a group of churches of all traditions, particularly looking at how the time people spend

together as a worshipping community might enable them to be better sent out to be the Church.

I don't think we are very good as the Church at grappling with how being part of the worshipping community might enable individuals to grow in faith and live as a disciple – a follower of Christ - to the glory of God among the people and places of their week.

I suspect you are familiar with stories such as the person who was prayed for during the intercessions at church because he was on the rota that week to assist with the homeless project. He commented on the fact that he appreciated being prayed for but wondered why no one had ever prayed for him in the intercessions before given that every day of the week he is operating on people as a surgeon and sees this as his vocation undertaken intentionally as a follower of Christ.

When I arrived in Gloucester I said to people that I did not want them to introduce themselves to me in the first instance as the church warden of X or the PCC secretary of Y but rather I wanted people to introduce themselves to me as who they are in the wider world as part of the whole people of God. People have told me about their responsibilities as a carer, or said something about employment, or perhaps their volunteering or their involvement with sport, or their weekly trips to chemotherapy. It may also be that they have a specific role or responsibility among the worshipping community as a member of the PCC or the treasurer ... And I'm not wanting to ignore that, but I am wanting to enable us to be careful about how we define ourselves with each other; and how all the different parts of who we are and what we do are better integrated in the way we relate to one another as the people of God and how we see ourselves as God's people in the world.

In trying to adopt this approach I admit that whilst I've succeeded well in some places, in others I have seriously failed. It's been sobering at various diocesan events to find myself immediately asking someone which church they're from and hear them reply that they thought I didn't want to know that as the first bit of information!

Some churches include something in their worship which LICC call 'This Time Tomorrow' (TTT): One or two people share something of what they are likely to be doing the next day and then the church prays for them.

I know a church where they compiled a book for Advent which included short stories from lots of different people about their Monday morning activity.

Church noticeboards can be refocused so that where there are photos of the vicar and the PCC and the toddler group leader etc it also says something about what the person does when they're not at church...

All of this is about re-orientating ourselves so that when we gather together to 'do' church, we do so as the people of God gathering to give God glory, to be forgiven,

fed and transformed so that we can be sent back out to be Christ's transforming presence as the people of God among the people and places of our week.

I recently visited a Christian who runs a small business which he felt called to establish on Christian values. All the employees know that whether or not they are Christian. He works long hours. He has faced many challenges and regularly has to make decisions which pose major ethical questions.

It was evident to me that what he is doing is truly a vocation.

Very sadly he doesn't find that his local parish church is particularly interested in his work. He has recently come off the PCC due to time pressures and has experienced criticism from some people who don't think he's putting his weight behind the church and is perhaps too preoccupied with his secular work.

So often when I am talking with children or adults in different settings I repeat my passion for each person to go on discovering who they have been created to be – to go on becoming. Yet I wonder how well we live that with each other in our worshipping communities...

It takes time and prayer and wisdom to recognise and nurture different ministries in different people, and it needs a commitment to see the whole person in all that they are and do, and who they are becoming.

Though we are many: The Ministry of the Whole People of God.

So I've said something about **connection & God's mission of transformation**; I've commented on the **meaning of ministry** and said something about the need for the **Kingdom participation of every baptised follower of Jesus Christ Sunday to Saturday...**

There's so much more I could say about how as the people of God we join in with what God is doing in the world... But time is short...

However, there is one issue I do want to touch on before I finish and that is the issue of

(d) **Conflict**. Indeed we have talked about reconciliation being at the heart of God's mission. And at the start I commented on the truth that we are broken and flawed and have failed to live in perfect relationship with God, neighbour and the created world.

The whole people of God are not whole – not yet. But we are called to participate in God's work of reconciliation and it's at the heart of every Eucharist in which we participate (and for that please hear Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper or whatever it is you call it).

Whenever I break the bread at the Eucharist I am acutely aware of both our unity and our immense diversity as the people of God: "Though we are many we are one

body because we all share in one bread”... and I am *also* aware of the brokenness of that body – the fractured and broken bread.

Whilst we can marvel at the truth that in Christ we are many different parts of one body (and that amazingly we are all unique), we also need to acknowledge the truth that such immense diversity among broken human beings brings with it so much potential for conflict within those relationships.

And yet, when I talk with Christians about my interest in conflict, it’s surprising how many people say things such as *‘oh we don’t have conflict in our church’*...

We know that shalom and perfect relationship with God, neighbour, self and creation is at the heart of who God is and who we have been created to be, but we also know that this is not yet reality. And yet somehow because we’re talking about the Church, we want to pretend that perfect harmony exists. Even though we’ve said yes to joining in with God’s mission of reconciliation and transformation we somehow pretend that it’s about everyone else and not us.

My response to a church which denies the existence of conflict is to suggest two possibilities: Either they’re not in a very healthy place because people aren’t able to express difference; Or if they really do all think in exactly the same way then it’s probably a very monochrome church which doesn’t reflect the diversity of the Body of Christ, and the worshiping community has probably become more like a club of like-minded people.

We live in a world where there is a fear of that which is other. In most situations of conflict in our world there is an intolerance and even a hatred of the other – Those who are from a different nation, a different religion, a different

If you have ever done any work around conflict you will no doubt have heard people say that conflict is normal. In many ways, that’s stating the obvious but it needs to be continually repeated: Conflict is normal because diversity is normal. Conflict is normal - What matters, is how we handle it...

.. Or to use an expression which is becoming familiar within the Church of England *‘How do we disagree well?’*

So, in being committed to the ministry of the whole people of God there is something important here about acknowledging our immense diversity and recognising that how we handle conflict and stand together in places of difference is actually going to be vital in our ministry.

This came home to me with poignancy when I did a placement in South Africa in 1994, just before the first elections following the official end of apartheid. Here was the Church trying to look afresh at what it meant to be one body made up of the diverse people of God, not least of different colours and cultures, and how this should more radically affect how they lived out what it meant to be the Body of Christ, equal members, each unique but different. I remember it being extremely painful for people coming from different perspectives as they spoke about things they had never discussed before. In this particular church people had spent years being

polite with one another but gradually as they told their stories, there were feelings of anger, shame and guilt as different members reflected on their lives. There was genuine repentance that 'though they were many' they had not been one body and this had hindered their ministry and lives as disciples.

It took the General Synod of the Church of England some time to discover that if we were going to find a way of living with a circle that cannot be squared regarding women being ordained to the episcopate, then we needed to find a way of having conversations together in a non-adversarial way. Just speaking *at* one another over a debating chamber was not going to enable us to relate as brothers and sisters in Christ. The way forward had to be rooted primarily in relationship and not legislation.

One of the tenets of managing conflict is to go towards each other and not away. It takes intentionality, courage and time. It's about recognising the divine spark in the other who then becomes a named individual – a neighbour - rather than 'them' versus me or us.

When I arrived in Gloucester, I took the decision that some of the first clergy with whom I would meet for 1:1 conversations would be those who I knew would be struggling with having a diocesan bishop who is a woman.

Being intentional about relationship is not about niceness or politeness, it won't always even be about friendship, but it is about that human connection which I highlighted at the very beginning. A connection which is rooted in our relationship with God and which is marked by love, honesty and authenticity. When connection is strong, the relationship can cope much better with disagreement and robust conversation.

We are now at the end of 2 years of shared conversation regarding human sexuality – and although everyone is desperate to hear a pronouncement from the bishops, it's important to take in the significance of the actual process.

When people say that all the time we are spending on discussing human sexuality is a distraction from our core ministry, I want to gently challenge and say that this *is* about ministry. It is about something much bigger than human sexuality - It is about how we live our relationship with one another in places of intense difference and it's about going deeper in our participation in God's work of reconciling the world.

I truly believe this is a gift which the people of God can offer to the world around us. The media might like criticising us, and people around might show scorn, but I also believe that sometimes, the Church is engaging in conversations that others don't know how to have...

Just look at our country's inability to live with difference following the EU referendum. I've just been on holiday in USA where the gloves are off regarding the forthcoming elections. People don't know how to disagree well. But as Christians we must live this differently: 'Though we are many we are one Body.'

I must draw to a close so that we have plenty of time for questions and indeed connection:

I've talked about (a) **connection & God's mission of transformation**; (b) the **meaning of ministry** and (c) the **Kingdom participation of every baptised follower of Jesus Christ Sunday to Saturday**; and I've ended by saying a little about (d) **conflict**.

**Rt Revd Rachel Treweek, Bishop of Gloucester
October 25th 2016**

A prayer used by the General synod in 2015 - commended to the wider Church:

Almighty Father, Give us grace and strength this day to build up your church in love for the world, in the making of disciples and to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Plant your hope deep within us. Open our eyes to a fresh vision of your kingdom. Give us wisdom for the common task. Draw us and all your Church deeper into Christ, our foundation and cornerstone, that we may work together as one body, in the power of the Spirit and for the sake of your glory. Amen.