

Building God's Kingdom

In the middle of last month, the church reached the end of the Easter season as we celebrated Pentecost. While for many, Easter was over as soon as the last egg was eaten, the church keeps on celebrating, singing 'Alleluia' until we reach the Feast of Pentecost. After this celebration, we return to Ordinary time until November. At Pentecost, we remember how we have seen the risen Christ appear to his disciples, his message of 'Wait' resounding in their ears as he ascended to heaven and then, finally, the waiting is over. The promised help, the Holy Spirit, comes to the disciples and equips them to spread the good news of God's love – first of all in Jerusalem but then to the ends of the earth. People are baptised and become followers of Jesus Christ and the church is born. The church that is entrusted into our hands now – for we are the people of God in this day and this age, charged with making the good news known, charged with helping God to build the kingdom.

In the weeks before Pentecost we took part in our Archbishops' call to prayer 'Thy kingdom come'. We prayed for God's kingdom to come in our lives, in that of our friends, in our church, in our town and further afield. But what happens now? If the Archbishops set aside a week of prayer, does that mean that after that week, we no longer have to pray? Can we say that we've done our bit now and that the rest is up to God?

One of the wisest pieces of advice ever given to me about prayer is that we should only ever pray if we are happy to be part of the answer. We can't just dump stuff on God and say 'This is what I want, now I'm going to sit back, put my feet up and wait until you deliver!' When we pray, we need to be attentive to what God starts to do in response. We need to keep our eyes, ears, hearts and minds open to see whether we are being invited to get involved. So in response to my question about what happens after our week of prayer, we can't just sit back and say 'I've done what Archbishops Justin and Sentamu have asked, I've done what Jo has asked, now it's all done'. Now, we have to start watching out..... how is God building his kingdom in my life, how is he going to do it in my home, my school, my workplace, my family, my town.....? And how am I to help? To some extent, this is something that you have to work out for yourself, but I would like us to continue with this theme over the coming months, particularly asking the question of how is God using us as the church of St Martin's to build his kingdom in our parish, and how is he wanting to use us in partnership with St Andrew's to build his kingdom in the

areas we both serve? In the autumn, we'll be looking once again at our mission priorities and looking at how we can reach out in love to those in our communities in most need. I'd also like to explore how we can grow in faith more deeply and pray more as a community of faith.

But there's no need for us to wait until we have had ideas or come up with some plans..... we actually have all we need here with us today. We have ourselves, each one of us lovingly created by God our Father, who has called us by name and who is always with us. We are part of the body of Christ, followers of Jesus, walking alongside him through life. We are filled with God's Spirit who will help us walk into God's future, grow together in love, help us to share together, pray for each other and bravely carry the light of God to places where he is not known. If we do these things, led by the Spirit, we will be doing our part to build God's kingdom.

Gracious God,

*We thank you that you have brought us to know and recognise you
Through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We thank you for those who shared the Gospel of Jesus with us.

We ask that in turn we may pass the Good News on to others.

Anoint us with your Holy Spirit,

so that we may have confidence to speak of you,

Sensitivity to walk with others on their journey,

And love to inspire us to reach out to others.

Most of all, give us a passion to see your Kingdom come,

That we might take risky steps

To be your witnesses to your world.

Through your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

