

A Transfigured Church:

How are we to *'behave in the world?'* Posits Paul. It's a question that's been bothering me all week. It's been bothering me because of the shenanigans that have surrounded the Lambeth Conference; the conference at which the partners and spouses of gay Anglican bishops have been so very cruelly excluded. I think, know, I speak for many here at the cathedral when I say *'not in my name.'*

Now the thing about behaviour is that it's observable, empirical even. It gets picked up by the media, it gets picked up by celebrities and it gets picked up by so called ordinary people. People, ordinary people, will come to a judgment about the Christian faith based on their perception of the Church and how the church relates to them, that is if it relates at all.

This week I met a member of the Pride in the Port committee who cried when I told him that we were going to fly the flag over the Pride Weekend. This week I met with another person who said, *'I want to believe in God, but God's people don't want to believe in me.'* Today I received a message, you can read it on Twitter, from a near neighbour – someone who lives just up the road from the cathedral – who wrote: *'slowly coming to realise that so many of have been lied to about God and what we deserve.'*

More positively members of our local community – through the work of Pantry on the Hill – have said some kind and interesting things about the church, and some have even said that they might come and join us for worship and other activities. I am also very excited about other missional, relational, possibilities that seem to be emerging.

How we *'behave in the world,* matters, for how we behave, both as the local church or cathedral in our case, or the national and international – the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church if you prefer – is the evidence for who and what we value, what we stand for, and who and what we care about.

At a very simplistic level what we value, how we behave, and what we look like to the world outside the church equals mission.

Jesus, you see, isn't an empirical phenomenon, but we are. This is why the Church is described as *'The Body of Christ.'* So, when we ask how we are to *'behave in the world,'* we should also ask *'what do we look like to the world?'* Behind this question, however, there is a massive assumption and question: visibility. Are we a visible church and do we want to be a visible church? Do we want to be a church that stands out and shines as a transfigured beacon of faith, hope, love, and *'radical Christian inclusion?'*

Let's assume the answer to these questions is 'yes.' This Sunday I would like to do something a little different with my sermon. Instead of giving a homily or carrying on with my homily I would like to offer a pop poem (pop because I don't really understand the rules of poetry), entitled **A Transfigured Church**. Some of the words I have used are taken directly from the readings, others are mine:

A Transfigured Church:

I want to belong to a transfigured church; an enlightened, shimmering, shining church.

A pulsating, vibrant, and vivacious church.

A fluid, responsive, and adaptable, church.

A church both restless and patient, a church that knows how to run fast and stand still.

A church anchored in tradition yet, through reasoned critique, set free.

A church bold in action and outspoken in concern.

A paradoxical, sometimes confusing, yet consoling church.

A church that understands that reaches out, embraces, and peaceably shares bread and wine, with all.

A church that's sincere, frank, and true.

A church trusted for its integrity.

Valued for its hospitality.

Known for its charity.

Esteemed as a place of sanctuary.

I want to belong to Holy Church, a Godly Church, a Transfigured Church; a catholic and apostolic church; a church which others can look at and join with all in saying:

'I too belong, and I too believe,' (Amen).