

## Closing Sermon at Diocesan Conference

### INTRODUCTION

These are simply brief reflections on our time together in the Conference completed just before we began this service.

I hope it has not been a surprise but an encouragement how much of what +Steven Croft & Ann Morisy, as well as Simon Oliver & Canon Hosam, have shared with us has been in line with, and helped us think further about, our own vision as 'Joining Together in the Transforming Mission of God' through Living Worship, Growing Disciples & Seeking Justice.

- 1) **An economy of abundance, a cascading of grace.** These phrases from Ann, and all she shared around them, have struck me strongly. I find myself asking

What would that look like in Israel/Palestine – if instead of an economy of scarcity ruling abundance and grace overflowed?

What would it look like in the leafy suburbs of Wollaton or a village like Ranskill or a community like Manton?

What would a Deanery Chapter feel like – or a Synod looking at Parish Share (and we have examples of it already happening) – or a Bishop's Staff Meeting? As a Bishop's Staff we have recently identified the need for us to spend more time in contemplation not just getting on with the business.

- 2) Like +Steven I am convinced that **we are called to the business of growth.** Like him I find the idea of reflecting on seasons and soils very helpful images as they help us steer away from too strong a reliance on industrial images of production which are simply mechanistic rather than organic.

We have not only bought into industrial production images sometimes, we have also bought into images of the market and the economy. We have fallen into the trap of believing the economy rules.

- "At the end of the day it all comes down to the money, to what we can afford".

No it doesn't - it comes down to our willingness to live like Jesus and it comes down to the God who is the Creator and Source of all things – and the one for whom all things exist. It comes down to our willingness to live vulnerably.

### 3) **Enlarging The Tent**

Bedouin Tent – expansion possible by stretching the cords, putting stakes in afresh and adding new capacity – to be a place of hospitality; a place of safety for the stranger and the unexpected visitors.

But you don't grow the tent in one leap; you grow it bit by bit.

God's grace is a huge marquee – but for each of us in our communities there is a tent. A tent is

- Mobile
- Flexible
- Surprisingly in the Bedouin context Gloriously comfortable and welcoming
- Hospitable.

If we are to grow – it will be by stretching the cords further – but not stupidly, rather steadily.

It will be by being flexible and mobile

- It will be by being hospitable
- generous
- nurturing

### 4) A final additional thought:-

**God – to enlarge the tent shrunk it** in the sending of his Son into the world as a human being.

- The word 'tabernacled' dwelt in a tent amongst us – a tent that would be destroyed on the Cross. He did this in order to enlarge the tent.

I wonder when being like Jesus might involve us in 'shrinking the tent' in order that it might, in resurrection, be enlarged?

### **Conclusion**

Let us get on with playing our part – sowing, weeding, watering, ploughing up hard ground, reaping, pruning, etc. Let us do so with a conviction in the abundance of God in creation and salvation – let us cascade grace - and see what God grows.