

May I speak in the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen

Yesterday was a wildly windy day. As we all sat in the cathedral for the licensing of the readers, including our own Liz German, we could hear the storm howling around the spires and battering against the eaves. It felt living and active, the sort of wind that ruthlessly whistles, rushes waves, and rustles robes.

As Bishop Chris introduced the service yesterday he explained that the Office of Reader is located in a Ministry of the Word. And lo and behold, today we find that our reading from the Letter to the Hebrews opens with that line 'The Word of God is living and active'. So this morning, I'd like to explore the significance of this description for our parish.

The letter to the Hebrews is an enigmatic little letter; nobody is quite sure who wrote it and for a time nobody was quite sure whether it should be in the canon of scripture at all. People often think it was written by Paul, and yet literary critics are quick to point out that it can't be for three reasons; it lacks the rudeness of Paul, it lacks the grammatical errors of Paul, and very unlike Paul this letter doesn't go off on tangents.

The Letter to the Hebrews has a single central question that it tries to systematically work out; it asks How can we approach God? This is a wonderful question – how can we approach God. Most often we are concerned with whether God will approach us.

We hope and pray that God will answer our pleas, hear our questions, prove to be victor in our wrestling matches.

Yet, the Letter to the Hebrews doesn't come from this angle ... it isn't about Christians waiting to be found by God, the whole letter seeks to equip Christians to move towards God for themselves and the little snippet we have today concentrates on the Word of God in relation to this question.

Liz in her Ministry as Reader, and indeed all of us in our ministry as Christians, come into regular contact with the Word of God. Not as dry old letters in black and white upon a newsheet or in a bible, but in the sense conveyed by Hebrews. Where the word is described as living, active, sharp, piercing and discerning. When Hebrews talks about the word, it points towards the central dynamism of God's revelation in Creation.

The Word of God doesn't mean an old historical text, or a long ago idea for creation, but the very present and dynamic movement of God in the now. Just as the wind dynamically swirled around the Cathedral yesterday, the truthful verse of God swirls and swoops upon us, within us, and between us as the church in this place. Wind has no barriers it can reach into the smallest of cracks, move the heaviest of loads, it rustles leaves equally as it blows open doors.

The word of God is not dissimilar ... the revelation of God is meant to permeate every aspect of a person's being, bringing out the true nature of things, blowing away any cobwebs and opening up the locked doors.

A few weeks ago we had an unusual visitor at Morning Prayer. While we prayed and read the readings for the day, a little Robin was sat upon this pulpit. He sat there for the whole time, cocking his head to one side, almost seemed to be listening. After we had prayed we opened up the west door and tried to guide him out. The robin saw the light at the end of the aisle and eventually took flight out into the day light. That Robin did what the word of God seeks to do every Sunday. To take flight from this place, coasting on the breeze, into the daylight world outside.

When we gather here together we hear the verses of Scripture read by just one person from the lellium, yet they weave their way into each and every one of our ears and hearts. In this activity we are standing in the slipstream of God's revelation. When a particular word pricks our conscience or sticks with us for the rest of the day or week ... that is the revelation of God permeating our being. Taking flight like the robin did that day.

Over the coming months we look forward to Liz helping us with this aspect of our faith. As a Reader she will interrogate the scriptures on our behalf, she will weave God's revelation into her own words, and we will hopefully hear how that same winding sweeping spirit led her to be received as a Reader with us today.

But the letter to the Hebrews shows that the Word of God goes way beyond the readings, way beyond any preaching by one person on a Sunday morning. Where the Ministry of the Word becomes enigmatic, exciting, and extraordinary, the Hebrews letter reminds us, is in the person of Christ.

There's no doubt that Christ blew a gale around the banks of the Galilee, blew open locked doors in Jerusalem ... but beyond that, Christ became an almighty cyclone into the whole of creation. As a result generations of people found themselves incorporated into a body which in its life, faith, and action, became the embodied walking and talking, acting and living word of God. You and I are here in the wake of that event.

All of us, in our lives, in our actions, in our praying together, communing together, and our going out into the world ... are participants in God. We have each been given a tiny fragment of that revelation to proclaim, bear witness to, and live out.

Liz may be newly licensed as a reader, I may be here as your licensed curate, but the truth of it all is that every one of us has been licensed by Christ in our baptism. The Ministry of the Word, in all its revealing, acting, creating, and discerning is *our* ministry shared between us all.

In a moment we will hear Liz make declarations about her ministry with us but these responsibilities do not just belong to the clergy, or the officeholders ... they belong to all of us.

How can we approach God? By embracing this shared ministry in our lives and actions, proving that there is no corner of the world that the word can't blow into. We make sure that the Word of God takes flight from this pulpit, to fly freely out of that door into the outside, and let Christ reign in the things we do and say in the wider world.

Amen