

Bridge Building – My Community

John 14 15-17 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.”

John 20 22-23 - Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

Acts 2 1-11 “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.”

Barbara Brown Taylor: One Step at a Time, from The Preaching Life [Mark 5.32]

“Do not fear”, he says, “only believe”. Only believe what? He does not say, but those are the two choices, apparently, when human beings discover that they are not in charge after all. They can fear, or they can believe... They can be afraid or they can believe. Judging by my own experience, it’s almost never a matter of either/or. I do not know anyone who believes all the time, but I do know how both fear and belief feel, and that there is a palpable difference between the two.

Belief... is not a well-fluffed nest, or a well-defended castle high on a hill. It is more like a rope bridge over a scenic gorge, sturdy but swinging back and forth, with plenty of light and plenty of air but precious little to hang on to except the stories you have heard: that this is the best and only way across, that it is possible, that it will bear your weight.

All you have to do is believe in the bridge more than you believe in the gorge, but fortunately you do not have to believe in it all by yourself. There are others to believe it with you, and even some to believe it for you when your own belief wears thin. They have crossed the bridge ahead of you and are waiting on the other side. You can talk to them if you like, as you step into the air, putting one foot ahead of the other, just that: just one step at a time.”

Questions for Reflection

It can be helpful to map your community, noticing the different areas and agencies, businesses and organisations, the people you tend to “go between.”

1. During the Covid19 crisis have you reappraised your sense of what God is calling you to do? How are your priorities changing?
2. Has your community grown stronger through the crisis? What have you noticed?
3. Do you recognise the role of bridge-builder in your own role? In the role your church/chaplaincy/project plays? It will be different for each setting, and for each church in a multi parish benefice.
4. What are the chasms, the divides, the needs of your community? What would “holy community” look like?
5. Does your church/chaplaincy/project build social capital? What kind – bonding or bridging?
6. What needs to change in the way you are working, or the way your church/chaplaincy/project is working?

12 Noon (email chris@christhorpe.org)

Zoom Meeting – Comments, Questions and Discussion Plenary Session Finish by 1pm