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ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

Sermon on Fourth Sunday after Trinity – July 5, 2020

'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance'to what will I compare this generation?

At the beginning of March the world changed, and the way we 'do' Church had to change. Yes of course these past sixteen weeks have been extremely demanding on each and every one of us – and particularly on this island of Lanzarote. We asked - How would we ever survive as a serving Church here in this place? Our virtual services have turned the darkness to light for so many. As we have reached out from this place we have found so many who have come to worship with us in ways which they never envisaged.

Families torn apart by the virus – trapped and locked down in different parts of the world – have been held together week by week with worship that has given us all a glimpse of what God can do, and is doing, through small and weak instruments.

Our message week by week has been one of fresh hope – and in these past two weeks in particular we have heard such strong messages from firstly our own Bishop David Hamid and then last week, the former Archbishop of York affirmed our calling here on Lanzarote to a very special 'welcoming' ministry.

We have been reminded that as Christians we are not to be passive violets.

We are to be active, engaging with the world, to put it in line with God's plan.

We may have to stand up for things that the world around us might choose to ignore or even reject. We need to value people over money and economics – and as Christians we cannot escape Christ's call to be different from the world.

To be a disciple is very challenging, at times it is even radical.

So how are we going to go forward here in this place to fulfil the challenges presented to us, but also to build on the opportunities to proclaim the Gospel to those who visit and those who have found a new way through their experiences with our virtual services?

Our ministry now is to a global congregation. They are hungry and we have the nourishment to offer through God's word and the love of Jesus that so many are experiencing for the first time.

Our Electoral role examination this year for me was so revealing. Most of our members are in the 'high risk' category.....and very little thought was being given to how we can strengthen and develop our ministry here. Of course it is so important to bring a loving care and compassion to those in what can quite simply be described as their 'twilight years'. Years that should not be feared, but a time of being held in respect and the fullest gratitude for lives well lived as they served their Lord from the cradle to the grave. Their wisdom is something to be cherished and shared and stored by our younger generations.

But where are those, not even children, those in their twenties, thirties, forties?

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We played the flute to you, and you did not dance.

Where are our younger generations hearing the name and teaching of Jesus Christ?
What is it, that we can offer to the youngest to welcome them and their needs to join this household of God?

Church to so many (young and old) is seen as a Church with restrictions – not just the walls, but often asking them to be quiet, not engaging them in what seems to be a ritual which can be so dreary that they will never darken the church's doors again.

How will we attract younger folk? How can they sit and sing, and laugh – as they listen to the wonderful stories of our Lord Jesus – bound together in a common task – and where we can learn from one another?

We have proved that a church 'without walls' is indeed Christ's church.
Of course, we come together just as we needed to do this morning here in this place.
Gathering as the people of God. But look around you. Where are the younger folk?

That is why our new Chaplaincy Centre in Tias will allow us to bring young people together in a myriad of experiences. It is also a place where compassion and care and understanding for those who are elderly, lonely, marginalised and anxious will find love flowing from every corner. Not an exclusive club but a centre with the door open to welcome the stranger in our midst.

Our visitors will return to this island – and in greater numbers than ever before – many are already planning their visit to come and share their experiences.

We are embarking on being the new and vibrant welcoming Church – engaging with all.
Each of you has a part to play – even if it is to just tell your story to a neighbour or friend who wants to know how Jesus has changed your lives.

Bishop David Hope summed it all up in his reflection last week – so often in the midst of tragedy and despair – there is hope and promise about ourselves and our future. He reminded us that 'the glory of God is a human person fully alive'

So let us welcome our visitors in new and exciting ways – for the fact is, that by our welcome they will return year by year as they receive refreshment, respite, reinvigoration and renewal – all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen