

#ThyKingdomCome – Exeter Cathedral's Pentecost Beacon Event.

“In response to the Archbishops’ Call to pray for the evangelisation of our nation, over 200 people from the parishes of the Diocese of Exeter joined in prayer at Exeter Cathedral on Pentecost evening. In worship enriched by music from the University of Exeter’s Chapel choir we were invited to journey around the Cathedral, praying reflectively and interactively using a variety of specially created prayer spaces.”

Moved by the Spirit, at the last moment I decided to make the short pilgrimage up to the Cathedral to represent St Mike's and become part of our Archbishops' great Wave of Prayer as it rippled gently into Exeter. With their resources and experience from “Holy Ground”, Canon Anna and the team at the Cathedral know how to make a good job of this sort of interactive alternative worship event. Spotting the big screen I found a seat near the front, but the font size, projection and synchronisation were all good.

In contrast to Beacon Events elsewhere, there was no big name Speaker, just a sensitive welcome and blessing from Bishop Robert, no over-amplified music group, just the University Chapel Choir singing traditional and Taize with occasional obbligato woodwind, including a beautiful setting of Veni Sancte Spiritus.

The 4-minute multi-media meditation on “Breath” was very effective and can be found on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRLbyCBk5p0> Fine for those from a liturgical background, but may have worried our more word-based brethren, or overwhelmed some on the autistic spectrum. It's also interesting how many words can be made from the 6 letters of the word “Breath”, earth, heat, heart, beat, bathe, . . ., over 50 in all. The imagery of the Intercessions, fire, floodtide, lifegiver, was vivid but sensitive given recent natural and man-made disasters.

Then came half-an-hour to use the experimental prayer spaces created around our vast and beautiful Cathedral. All rather Celtic or “Beaker Folk” with plenty of tea-lights, fairy-lights, post-it notes, fish to cut out and net, salt, bricks and pebbles. Outside the Dean was incensing those who trod the labyrinth. To be different, I placed my pebble in the choir part of the brick outlined Church, away from all the other pebbles. Some of the side chapels used were not readily wheelchair accessible.

UPLOAD, the youth Church event which the Cathedral is hosting in June for 14-25 year olds was also advertising. An earnest young girl suggested I might take a card to pray for 5 people; I probably pray for a hundred, living and departed, every day. A serious youth worker may now understand that making Jesus loud, 'cool' and challenging, is not be the kind of Gospel that attracts every young person; some sure, but not all.

We gathered again for a recorded message from the Archbishop of Canterbury encouraging us to use the Lord's Prayer more deeply as a spur to evangelism. I confess I sometimes find Justin Welby a difficult person to like. His Christian journey, which he tends to push; messy, unbelieving childhood, sudden conversion, blessed abundant adult life, is the opposite to mine; a blessed Christian upbringing, evolving commitment, messy adulthood, sometimes feeling short-changed by God, but persevering.

We moved gently into the responses for Compline, checked which version of the Lord's Prayer was on the screen and prayed it together a little more carefully than usual, agreed with our neighbours that it had been a wonderful evening of renewal, and went out hoping that the loving Spirit of the living God might break, melt, mould and fill us, and more of His peace and purpose might settle on the people of Devon.

RTHBarnes.