

Summary of the Address by Bishop John to Deanery Synod,
16th September 2008.

What should be the strategy for the Deanery? Any strategy is not ours, but God's. Ours is to determine tactics, to fit in with His strategy. According to the end of St. Mark's gospel, it is to proclaim the Good News.

We are to look at what God is doing in Christ. Colossians 1: 15,20 "**He is the image of the invisible God. . . making peace through his blood, shed on the cross**" – i.e. to reconcile all things to Himself - and the astonishing thing is that He has called us to work with Him in this mission. This is an enormous privilege - really worth living and dying for.

Would we choose us? Look at 1 Corinthians 1 for nothing we have to deal with is as bad as in Corinth. Verse 26: "**Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. . . He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus.**" (i.e. they were stupid, weak and common ♪) Yet Paul gives thanks for them, through whom God turned the world upside-down, and without whom we would not be here tonight.

These are times of great challenge for the Church, but also times of great opportunity. The soil is ripe in this secular and atheist society; atheists are becoming more vociferous as they are actually becoming weaker and therefore more defensive.

To respond, we need to be discerning God's Word, immersed in the Scriptures and working together. Declining numbers of stipendiary clergy may be God calling us to new patterns of ministry - the clergy being episcopal (exercising oversight). For example, we should recover the power of testimony, of witness - as Mark says: "**Go and proclaim.**" Lay people may need to become more confident in their witness. Next September there will be new courses available in Authorised Ministry, e.g. evangelism, children's work, worship leading, etc.

God has a task for each one of us; if we are immersed in prayer, exciting times lie ahead.

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