

Wednesday 7th May

Acts 7:44-50

'Our ancestors had the tent of testimony in the wilderness, as God directed when he spoke to Moses, ordering him to make it according to the pattern he had seen. Our ancestors in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our ancestors. And it was there until the time of David, who found favour with God and asked that he might find a dwelling-place for the house of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?"

This message was proclaimed by Stephen, ordained by the disciples to serve at table; chosen by God to speak the truth of God with boldness at the cost of his life – whilst being watched by Saul, who would become Paul an apostle of the early church.

Attitudes and opinions are changing. I remember quoting a Charlie Brown Cartoon in my Ordinands' Testimony service back in 1992. Linus is saying to Charlie Brown, "I am only dogmatic about things which are a matter of opinion."

There are times when dogmas need breaking, and attitudes need amending.
Stephen – waiter to Preacher; Saul - persecutor to proclaimer; care assistant unskilled worker to key worker.

At various times through the history of the people of Israel there were changes in their understanding of where God rests, dwells or abides. Stephen addresses something of this in his message to the Sanhedrin, Tent, Tabernacle, and Temple?

After the death of Jesus was the question "Where is God now?"

In society today some will ask, "Where is God now?"

When Church buildings are shut, "Where is God now"?

God is where God has always been, always will be and where God can never not be; but I will not define that place, other than where there is love and love needed there is God.

Jesus challenged those of his time with the message that he was himself replacing the Temple. In recent years the message has been declared over and over that the Church is not the building but the people. In the light of this truth, and the current situation, how are we to be church and welcome others into church post Covid 19?

At Church Council we are invited to have a conversation on "the Work of God and the development of local church policy". That is at the top of a list of what should be on our agenda but I admit it often gets put to the bottom because we are focused upon property and finance, and ultimately it gets left out because it is getting to be nearly 9.30. Will our attitude change in time for October that we see things differently enough to question what is really of importance?

Where does God dwell, rest and abide?