

Hello everyone

I often hear people at the moment saying something like

I'm out of my comfort zone or I've just learnt how to do something differently.

It's strange isn't it?

Whether it's washing the car, cooking a meal or struggling with the latest digital platform, all of us seem to have embraced something new recently.

IT happened to me at the weekend and maybe you noticed the consequence of my discovery if you watched my recordings on the East church website page this week.

Where was your collar, someone what's app'd me on Sunday afternoon.

Now in my experience questions often have more than one answer. Just think about the current Brexit negotiations between the EU and the UK if you need convincing of that. The simple direct answer to the question where was your collar today, Alan is

In the cupboard where I keep my collars, but of course the request wasn't going to be followed by a request to borrow a clerical collar was it, It was really a question along the lines of why didn't you wear your collar on Sunday? No, the answer wasn't that I didn't need to since 121 had decided to give us a holiday courtesy of Martin fairs national service, but the answer was a simple one.

Involving two step ladders, a video camera and the wind.

The weather was so lovely on Saturday afternoon that I decided to record my videos in the manse garden rather than in the manse study.

What a mistake that was.

While we have chairs in the garden, I don't have a tripod and there is nothing at a suitable height to rest a video camera on or hold my notes. Ever resourceful, I got two step ladders out of the shed (Show off I hear you say who has two step ladders?)

I turned on the camera, settled myself in my chair and opened my mouth just at the point where the calm day turned decidedly windy and my notes were blown over the garden.

Since modern day life has removed the humble cloths peg from my life, after repeated attempts to record, I packed up my things and moved back to my desk where I proceeded to record my videos without my collar on. And more amazingly without realising I was wearing an open neck shirt even though it was staring right at me on the cameras ample sized monitor in front of me.

So that is the simple answer as to why I had no collar on in my videos on Sunday. The wind intervened to disrupt my life. As I reflected about it on Sunday, I thought how appropriate it was that around Pentecost, my life was disrupted by the wind. At least there were no tongues of fire resting on the petrol tank of the mower, I suppose.

If just a relatively gentle wind could change my priorities that day what must it have been like on that day of Pentecost when Luke presents a picture of what God's kingdom is like. Pentecost fulfilled.

Those seven nations and 10 lands mentioned when God constructs a big collage of all the people of the known world. When Pentecost came and Peter spoke up, all the people from so many nations were bewildered and said 'How can this happen?'

What does it mean?

It's like a dream to be interpreted. A dream where all people are gathered together to hear Peter proclaim the great deeds of God in their own languages. Luke has written the story down as mirror image of another

story hasn't he? Look in Genesis chapter 11. Just before you read of Abraham's father Terah, there is another story about speech recognition at a place called Babel. There the people are building a tower to reach heaven. To be on equal footing with God if you like, but in doing so the people shouted disaster down on themselves. They no longer understood each other and they were scattered all over the earth.

But here at Pentecost, Luke points us to a time when all that alienation and shredding and anguish and misunderstanding will stop. The Holy Spirit waters the dry earth, heals what is full of wounds, flexes what has become rigid, cherishes what is frozen and straightens what is bent as the marvellous 13th Century Pentecost hymn Veni Sancte Spiritus puts it.

On That day of Pentecost, the people who are gathered in Jerusalem are completely stunned by just what God can do with his people, the church.

That same spirit is poured out on us today and we should be stunned by all that God can do with us as his church today as Pentecost points us to the future shape of God's kingdom and asks us to help build it here on earth.

In his national service on Sunday, the moderator of the general assembly asked us to choose seven words that we might use to describe the mission of the church and what that means to us.

What words would you have picked? I suspect many of us would have picked a variation including serving, praising, encouraging and helping out together.

But the way we live out the form of those words will look different for all of us.

So just what are your seven words when it comes to describing the mission of the church?

Give it some thought, Go on.

Peace be with you

Amen