

Thank you so much for inviting me to respond to Bishop John's address. It is a great privilege to be able to take part in these special birthday celebrations. Until today I have never met Herr Teschner but I feel I have known him because of the stories John has told.

I would like to make two responses, one practical and one theological.

1. In a generation which "listens with its eyes and thinks with its heart" the quality of our relationships as Christians is key. Jesus himself said that others would know we were his disciples by the love we have for one another.

One place that Bishop John and I know well is Scargill House. It is set in the beautiful Yorkshire Dales. It is a Christian retreat, holiday and conference centre. At its heart is a community of about 35 people of different ages, nationalities and backgrounds. Some come for just a few months, others have been there for years. Their values are generous hospitality and welcome, prayer, laughter, integrity of lifestyle, care for creation and being a safe place for people to ask questions and meet with God. Their motto is "Lives shared, lives transformed, with Jesus at the centre". Many people who have gone there over the years as guests have had a fresh encounter with God, found support and encouragement in time of need and many have heard God calling them out to a new and more radical discipleship. But it is not only people who have lived on community or come as guests who have been impacted by what they have experienced. I think of a workman who was there for several weeks installing a biomass boiler. He knew nothing about Scargill and was not a Christian. But after a while he began to ask questions. What was this place? Why did so many people from different backgrounds come here? But above all why was everyone so kind and considerate and helpful to him a mere workman? Those who were working alongside him answered his questions and gave him the opportunity to ask more. They did not put pressure on him but by the time the project was finished he had given his life to Christ because of the way he saw him in others.

But it is not only in special set apart places like Scargill where the quality of relationships is important. The same is true in the local church. In the 1990s sociologist Grace Davie talked about the importance of belonging coming before believing. In my last parish, we had many community groups which ran out of the church building. Time and again I saw that those which were welcoming and inclusive drew people who knew nothing of Jesus to a place where, often after many months or years, they would begin to dip their toes in the shallow end. They began to discover what Jesus meant when he said that he was come that we might have life, life in all its fullness. It was the quality of loving relationships which drew people to faith not the quality of our liturgy or music or preaching. Without the love shown by Christians these people would never have begun on the journey, let alone discovered Jesus.

2. John spoke about the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit and the impact of the charismatic movement on the whole of the Church of England. We are aware that in Germany the impact of Charismatic renewal has not been so positive as groups have splintered and moved to the edges of the established churches. This can make us wary of talk about the Holy Spirit and yet the Holy Spirit is the agent of change in the life of individuals and churches.

In the mid 1980s and early 1990s John and I were involved in something called 'The Changing Church Course' which sought to help clergy reflect on the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and their churches without them throwing out all their theological training and inherited wisdom and leaving the Anglican church. I believe deeply that welcoming the work of the Holy Spirit does not have to mean adopting a Pentecostal doctrine of 'second blessing' or a particular style of worship or any insinuation that some people are 'better' Christians because of their experience.

I want to offer you a simple model that I and others have found helpful. When the NT speaks about being 'en Christo', 'in Christ' this includes several different dimensions (*put up diagramme*). There is the personal commitment to Jesus Christ when we turn from sin and acknowledge Jesus as Lord, we might call this the Protestant or evangelical dimension. There is the sacramental outworking of this in baptism and church membership – a more Catholic understanding of being a Christian. And there is the empowering dimension by which we know in the core of our being the love of God the Father and the gifting of the Holy Spirit for ministry – a more Pentecostal or charismatic emphasis. It seems to me that within the NT and throughout church history people have come to faith in a variety of ways. Some through the preaching of the cross, some through an encounter with God's miraculous power and some through belonging to the church first and discovering the personal dimensions of faith later.

I want to suggest to you that it is not the way that we come to faith that is important but that our faith encompasses every dimension of what it means to be 'in Christ'. You will notice there are dotted lines. The question we need to be asking is whether we as individuals and as churches are living the fulness of what God offers us in Christ? How we enter the circle is not as important as our willingness to welcome and explore all the riches within it. In the Anglican church, the charismatic renewal has helped us rediscover an important dimension of the Holy Spirit's work in the individual and the church. This has enabled all of us to look at faith and church and evangelism differently and I believe led to some of the changes which John has spoken. These changes are enabling us to reach those who previously have had no experience of the Christian faith and who have no interest in the life of the church. I believe that it is only as we welcome the whole work of God as we see it in the NT that we have any hope of seeing the tide turn and people come to faith in our generation as they did when the gospel was first proclaimed. My prayer is that in England and in Germany we will be open to the unchanging God who is always making all things new.