At a time when we as a global community are seeking reassurances about how best to respond to the pandemic, which is still adapting with new variants emerging; it is imperative that we have trust in those who are making difficult decisions on our behalf. It is very easy to complain or to castigate the decision making of those in authority, when making those difficult decisions are not down to us. It would seem that the same response to Jesus emerged within his ministry all those years ago. Here was a man who was preaching forgiveness, repentance, and universal love, peace and justice, so naturally those who could see that his approach was different to theirs and possibly counter to the existence of their own hold on power over others would seek to ensure that he was painted in a bad light. Casting out demons in the name of an evil power raises it head in this latest castigation of the ministry of Jesus. But the argument of the Scribes from Jerusalem is easily dismissed, as quite simply in the words of Jesus, how can Satan cast our Satan?

We are all very conscious of the things which we value in life, and we will at all costs seek to preserve them, however just as the time was right for Jesus to come amongst his people to encourage them to broaden their horizons and look at things differently, so too is the time right for the Church of today to do the same thing. We belong to a sacramental Church, and we believe that the power of the Holy Spirit of God resides within those who today have authority within it. This is why we must have confidence in those who lead us, believing that they are attuned to the will of God as revealed amongst them. All authority is God-given, hence the reason we are reminded in Genesis of the foundation of original sin, doubt, uncertainty fear and the blaming of others for our own actions are all cleverly revealed in this imaginative story, which encapsulates what can go wrong when we wilfully disobey the call of God within the breathe of the Spirit which resides within us.

Jesus affirms that a kingdom which is divided against itself is a kingdom which cannot stand. This I believe is a message for the Church of England at this time. We are all called by God to follow Jesus, to stand up for unity, peace, forgiveness, repentance and universal love. As such we like Jesus have to have trust in God that we are receiving divine guidance from him at this time, in order that we may all grow together to become the Church which he is calling us to be for this new generation.

I am reminded at this point of those famous words from Shakespeare’s Hamlet:

To be or not to be that is the question?

That question implies that we already have the answer to the question, but it is not certain that we wish to accept it. To be is to be the Church, united as one in the power of the Spirit totally committed to Mission and Growth. Not to be implies that although we can recognise what God is calling us to be, for quite honestly that is not hard to determine, for all we need to do is to look at Jesus and to follow him. But our ability to respond to Jesus, is however totally dependent simply on how willing we are to do just that.

Not many of us would willingly seek to engage on a course of action which would bring about the end of ourselves and all that we hold dear about the Church, and yet that is exactly what Jesus did for us. He deliberately preached the message of change, he demanded that we reject power and control over others and seek instead to serve them. He gave his life for us that we may be able to live, not just within the consequences of original sin, but in the reality of a new kingdom heralded in by his own self sacrificial love for us as his children.

It is therefore that I would like to add a little twist to those Shakespearian words and to say:

To build or not to build that is the question?

Through this subtle play on words we can accept wholeheartedly the answer that God is waiting for us to give him, in response to his message of unifying love. He calls us to be the Church, we in Jesus are the Church and together with Jesus there is nothing that we cannot achieve, but we must have confidence and trust that this is not just words but the reality of our existence.

We as Christians believe that we are at one with Jesus, bonded together in spiritual attachment to the unbroken unity of the Trinity which is God. As such there is no room within our approach to Church life for dissension, disharmony or for wanting simply to do our own thing. We are called to be the Church of today and tomorrow, we are the pioneers who will be setting the stones of aspirational obedience to Gods will, which will enable the Church of tomorrow to be built on the foundations of Jesus Christ, and not those laid down by ourselves or others from the past. To build or not to build does not speak of Church Buildings, to build or not to build speaks of the building up of the kingdom of God. That is what we are called to build in the Gospel message of today, we are called not to be divided by Satan, by the evil powers of maintaining control and power over our own church communities, we are called to build by ripping out Satan from amongst us and to relocate our being, so that it rests fully in the divine love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To be or not to be that is the question?

To build or not to build that is the Question?

We are called to be like Christ Jesus and we are called to build God’s Church.

We can only do this if we have trust and confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to direct us where we need to be, in order that the Church may be enabled to further its mission and so grow numerically and spiritually as the chosen people of God, chosen to follow Jesus by revealing real strength in weakness and real power in freely letting go of all aspects of control.

To give of ourselves completely to Jesus is the call upon us today, we are not called to save the Church, Jesus has already done that, we are called to be the Church as God intended it to be and in so being we will bring forth the changes required to promote mission and growth in the Church, in a world which needs so badly to place its trust and confidence in God’s divine will for all his people.

To be or not to be, will you be God’s disciples today?

To build or not to build, will you be part of a new approach to being Church, a Church being built on the foundation of Jesus?

Answer yes and growth will be inevitable, but linger in the past, be reluctant to change and the message of Hope in Christ Jesus will be lost, just at a point in our world when that Hope in Jesus is needed the most. For without hope, trust and confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit sent forth to us through the Father and the Son: the Church of Christ will be truly lost for ever.

Amen.