

## THE LONDON MISSION CIRCUIT (NORTH WEST)



July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005

Rev. Martin Tullett is Superintendent of the London NW Circuit and a part time Chaplain to St. Mary's Hospital. In both roles he was deeply affected by the bombings on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005. Here he tells the story of that day and the ones that followed. He offers some reflections on our society and the challenges facing us.

'The 7th July 2005 began no differently from any other day, but I was phoned early in the morning by the hospital. They said, 'There has been an accident'. I tried to get on the tube at the Bakerloo stop near my home but was told that the whole network was down. I managed to hail a taxi. The driver kindly put the radio on for me and we listened to an underground worker speculating, expressing his feeling that there was no way this was just an accident. As we got nearer to Paddington I jumped out of the taxi and ran to the hospital where I waited at the ambulance apron. The ambulances began to arrive. When I shut my eyes I can still see oily, bloody feet sticking out from ambulance blankets.

I spent time with some minor injuries as they came in and in the afternoon spent time with people suffering from major burns. On my way home from the hospital I met one of my congregation members hovering around the police station in some distress. I took her to my home, tried to comfort her and helped her to get through to an emergency contact number. On the Friday I returned to the hospital and saw my burns patients again as well as saying 'hello' to Prince Charles.

On Sunday, having spoken on the phone with my congregation member several times I decided to go and spend some time with her. It's my longest pastoral visit on record. Ten hours as it turned out. When I arrived I was told that the police would be around shortly and I waited initially hoping just to be there to welcome the police and to settle things down. Both the family and the police liked me around so I stayed till about 1 a.m. by which time the police weren't absolutely certain, but were sufficiently sure that they felt they wanted to tell the family that they thought they had their daughter in the morgue. During the week that followed I spent quite a lot of time with that family including visiting the temporary morgue and conducting the funeral on the Saturday. It was the second of the 7<sup>th</sup> July funerals.

The first three funerals were in turn a Moslem funeral, a Christian funeral, and a Jewish funeral. Many Hindus attended the one I conducted. I felt very privileged to be part of it but also very much caught up in the trauma people were feeling. I felt the inadequacy of the words I had to offer into that situation.

As time has gone on I have tried to reflect on the experience. I thought about my meetings in hospital. I spent some time talking to John and listened to him tell the story about an RAF gentleman coming into the carriage from the other train, talking with him about family and that sort of thing, preventing him going off to sleep and probably thereby saving his life. Whatever doctrine of the Fall we have as Christians, however much the image of God is marred in us, there is something of the innate

goodness of human beings still evident on a day when something of the worst of human beings is also in evidence. Human beings are basically good and it comes out in adversity.

Another patient, a young black woman was chatting brightly and laughing on the phone to her husband, witness to her husband's skill at lifting her beyond the trauma of the moment. Another woman told me this was not the work of Islam as she knew many good decent Muslim young people. Human goodness and human dignity was much in evidence.

The second thing to say is that July 7th points to the positive value of our multicultural society. What the Moslem extremists did was to attack, not Christian Britain, but multicultural society and what responded, and responded well was a multicultural society. My own experiences affirmed that. I was with Sikhs and Christians and Hindus while we waited for the outcome of the police inquiry as to whether it was indeed our friend who had died. At the service I conducted Christians and Hindus were present in roughly equal numbers. I spent time with Moslems and Anglicans trying to work out what we could do to respond better next time. As I did my ward visits on the afternoon of the 7<sup>th</sup> July I spent time talking with people of no particular religious faith, with Christians, and with Moslems. We held hands in a common tragedy on that day and it will leave with me a lasting impression of the good, the worth and benefit of a multicultural secular society. I say that with a firm commitment to what I believe to be Christian truth. I know that multiculturalism may imply a relativity of all truth but I do not think it's a necessary implication. I do believe that affirming secular society safeguards us from violence in our pursuit of religious truth.

And my third reflection - God is there! We believe in a God who as Jesus shows that he knows our pain. The hands outstretched on the cross are wounded hands of love. In choosing to accept the nails he chose also to accept the fire and the glass of 7/7.'

#### QUESTIONS:

- What were you doing on 7/7? How was your day affected?
- What are your reactions to the experiences Martin describes?
- How far do you agree with his conviction of the innate goodness of human beings?
- What sorts of experience do you have of our multicultural society? In your opinion, how important is it to work for such a society and its values? What might we best do to sustain it? What possible roles can you see for the churches?
- 'God is there' - in what ways do you find Martin's final reflection helpful?

**Bible Study:** there are many echoes in this story of Daniel 3:8 – 30. God's people were often found living in multicultural societies, and this is one of those occasions. The young men in the story were deeply involved in the life of their society, but they maintained their faith with integrity and courage. Such behaviour provoked both the enmity and the affirmation of different people within that society. It is a story of a violent world in which they had to face a fiery trial, but a miracle led them through uninjured.

- As you read the passage, how far do you agree with that summary of the passage, and what lessons might there be for living in a multicultural society today?
- How far do you find the notion of God's presence with his threatened followers in their time of trial a source of comfort?
- What Bible passage would you suggest to help the church think about the events of 7/7 and to reflect upon them?