

St Luke's in the City  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
10 June 2007  
Celebrating at the Crossroads

Dear Friends,

*The liturgical calendar offers many riches, the most important of which is the fact that it locates us and our faith firmly within the context of the community of believers. The lectionary will not let us be idiosyncratic believers, free to think or believe anything at all. The ebb and flow of its high days and ordinary days, the shifting colours and mood and the rearrangement of furniture, the cyclic pattern of ritual actions and pattern of readings from sacred Scripture carry us all along – regardless where each of us may be individually in our lives. I may feel buoyant or despairing at any given time, yet in the liturgy I am with all of you, and together our mixed-up collection of subjective feelings is held in a safe and sacred container which is both wider and deeper than any single one of us. In the liturgy we are like the occupants of a vessel carried by the ocean's swell. Not surprising that arks and boats have long been potent metaphors for the church, and that medieval architects sought to carve out that shape in the amazing timbers of church roofs such as St Luke's. This bobbing vessel, rising and falling through the crests and troughs of liturgical year is the Body of Christ on the way. Not isolated believers trying to save ourselves by our own imagined piety or strength, or good works or fervent beliefs. Rather, members of the Body of Christ, saved by grace through faith in being one body in Christ. With the troughs and peaks of Advent-Christmas-Epiphany and Lent-Easter behind us the church now sails into the expansive and pacific waters of the 'Sundays after Pentecost'.*

*During the course of these Sundays I am going to reflect upon various aspects of this sacred container which holds us safely together in spite, and through the riches of, our uniquely subjective experience. One of the blessings of our Anglican heritage is that though our reforming forebears sought to abolish ecclesiastical abuses, and recover the centrality of Scripture and the doctrine of justification by faith through grace, they did not succumb to the excessive rationalism of continental reformers. Tempted, certainly. Nevertheless, they resisted the temptation to erect a legally-binding edifice of confessional statement. The treasure of Anglicanism has been expressed by many of the giants from our tradition in the aphorism: Lex orandi, lex credendi – 'the law of prayer is the law of belief'. Belief, that is to say, is not to be forged out of holding to a list of propositions to be guarded at threat of hell-fire. Instead of constructing a confessional statement Anglicans fashioned a Prayer Book. Instead of making a list of propositions the conditions for belonging in the boat, Anglicans prayed liturgically – that is to say, prayer was not envisaged as a purely private matter between me and the Holy Spirit, but as the communal work of love we undertake in company with each other, Sunday-by-Sunday, week-by-week. As our little vessel plies these pacific 'Sundays after Pentecost' waters it is the prayer we make together, the liturgy, which forms and shapes our belief. All aboard!*

With my love,  
David