**On Lambeth Bridge with Christian Climate Action - or without**

*18 October 2019*

After being with XR in central London on the morning of Friday 18th October I followed instructions from CCA to try to find a ‘faith-group’ where I could share my Christian climate concerns with others. But nobody was there on Lambeth Bridge at their appointed time and, because of a lack of social media messages, I didn’t know where any Christian faith presence was likely to be (later I heard from them that they changed their plans and omitted to message people as they would have wished, for which they graciously apologised).

So went to the bridge and sat on a stone seat set back by one of the street-lamps. I was totally on my own - with an A4 placard in front of me - and sat silently while people in cars and buses gazed curiously at my wordin*g.*

But after 15 minutes three police officers came and stood aggressively in front of me.They were clearly suspicious because my placard read ***'Praying for our planet’****.*

One officer, their leader, said “Take that placard off and leave the bridge immediately”.

“Oh - why?"

“You're one of them” [*he meant XR*]

“I’m just me, here on my own as you can see”.

“But are you in sympathy with what they [*XR*] are saying?”

“Well aren’t we all in sympathy with current climate concerns?”

No real answer, simply two very challenging comments which I could hardly believe.

“I’m going to ask you to leave - now”.

I tried to talk to the officers to find common ground but they were, in their words, “just following orders. So go - now!”

The Dark One whispered in my mind and I could see that if I refused to go I’d be arrested, so I walked slowly to beyond where a line of ten officers ‘guarded’ the southern end of the bridge.

‘*Forgive me Lord’*

Once there and having collected myself I realised I wanted to speak again to that same police officer. I walked slowly onto the bridge (without my placard!) but couldn’t see him anywhere. I'd lost my chance.

What I had wanted to tell him was this :

“I respect you for just doing your job under orders. But less do I respect the person [*the Home Secretary or Met. commander?*] who gave you those instructions under the Section 14 Order that you told me was in place; you didn't explain what it really meant, but I think it's wrong that you were authorised to treat me in the way you have. And to judge me as you did, based solely on my four-word placard, is beyond belief".

The two challenging accusations they levelled at me were :

“*You are****protesting****- and under section 14 protests are not allowed”.*

“*You are causing a****disruption***”.

 Did my four words equal disruption? - a protest? Really!?

I might have asked myself about whether Jesus would have ‘disrupted’ in that quiet way. Would he have ‘protested’ by sitting silent, still and praying? And I might have wondered if Jesus was indeed in the House of Commons to which I looked as I prayed and where MPs were gathering to debate.

I might have stood my ground.

But I didn’t...

*.....and I’m sorry Lord,*

*for playing safe, for taking the easy way,*

*for not taking risks for you.*

*I acceded to ‘unjust power’,*

*and in so doing I let you down.*

*I’m sorry Lord*

*that I didn’t stand up for your values,*

*that I didn’t*

*allow myself to get arrested.*

(Later I looked online at the wording of a Section 14 Order and saw that my action

wasn't offending against the Order at all....yes, hindsight is a fine thing)