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Tue, 2018-06-26 14:27 -- Ruth Wilde



The photo above is of Lizzie Lowe.

I like to take the occasional jog along the river Mersey which runs past the southern edge of our parish in Didsbury; it also marks the border between Manchester and Cheshire. Although the route along the river is wooded and secluded in places we're actually in the middle of an urban jungle and the M60 can be heard roaring in the background. The route also takes me very close to the place where Lizzie took her life on 10th September 2014. Every time I run past the lonely field where she died my mind turns to the last four years: the loss, the pain, and the revolution of inclusion that our church has been through since that dreadful day. As I run past this spot I'm confronted by the truth that Lizzie took her life because she couldn't reconcile being gay and a Christian.

Last autumn as I was running with the river on my right and the field where Lizzie died on my left I noticed a rock sticking out of the water and how the river had no choice but to part as it found its way blocked by that solid object. Lizzie's story is like that rock. There is no way through it ? you have to go around it ? it's immovable and solid because it's true and there is no way to simply ignore it. I felt convicted that Lizzie's story had to be told and retold because the Church at large has to be confronted by its stance on inclusion. Some may wish to pass the story on the left and some on the right ? Lizzie's death will divide people into those who take the path of inclusion and those who entrench their views in the other direction, but my responsibility is simply to tell the story whatever the consequences.

I guess that the fruit of these musings are the two videos I have produced with John Bell from the Iona Community. The first video begins with a heart-breaking endorsement by Lizzie's parents and ends with questions for PCCs, church groups, leadership teams and house groups. In this first video John Bell

interviews me about Lizzie and our inclusion revolution. In the second video I interview John Bell about his sexuality and his decision to speak publicly after hearing Lizzie's story. Again, this second video ends with group discussion questions.

I'm very much a fair-weather jogger. The wonderful spring weather this year has given me the chance to run along the Mersey more than I would normally in rainy old Manchester. Just after the videos were placed on YouTube, and on our church website, I went out running in the evening sunshine and I passed that spot where Lizzie died. As I jogged along I saw a dandelion. It struck me that when the seeds are blown away in the wind they tend to grow where the soil has already been disturbed. I think these two videos will be like those seeds. Where people, groups and churches are already being 'disturbed', unsettled, or simply talking about inclusion these two videos might land and grow. Please help me to tell Lizzie's story and disperse those seeds by sharing them with people you think might benefit from watching them.

I'm so grateful to Inclusive Church whose statement helped our church in a time of real need. I'm also grateful to John Bell, OneBodyOneFaith for their sponsorship and above all to Hilary and Kevin Lowe who speak so bravely, and for the first time publicly, about their loss.

Nick Bundock is a parish priest in Manchester. His churches are St James and Emmanuel. The videos can be found on the churches' website [here](#) [1].

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Links

[1] <http://stjamesandemmanuel.org/beyond-inclusion/>