

REFLECTION for the 3rd Sunday of Trinity

June 2020

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Recently Brian spoke of getting out of our boat and Hazel spoke very movingly of relationships. So with me about to talk about bubbles it may seem very strange indeed, but bear with me as there are links with their talks and our readings today. They spoke of going out into our community and serving where there is need and of building relationships between ourselves and with others.

Bubbles seems to be one of the words that has come to the fore during this time of lockdown. Who can you see for any length of time? Who is in your bubble?

Now schools have their bubbles where groups of pupils are kept together all day to the exclusion of other children. This is where they learn in small groups together.

Social bubbles for families or friends are where people can be together and where they can enjoy and develop their relationships.

Our two churches seem to me to be a bubble. We are a joint benefice after all.

We heard in the reading from Acts that those who heard and believed Peter's message then devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

These are the four strands that Luke is telling us that are fundamental to be followers of Jesus, and why the growth of the new believers was so rapid.

The new Christians were constantly listening and learning from the apostles, they had a strong fellowship which could be seen by others through the love shown in their common life and for the example they set in their prayer and worship. Because of this God was adding to their number on a daily ongoing basis.

For us in this time of lockdown we have had more time to read and study the scriptures and the teachings of Jesus, plus the letters of Paul and Peter and

learning about how the disciples lived their lives and guided and encouraged the new Christians now that Jesus was not with them in person.

We can also spend more time in prayer. Talking to God about all that is on our heart and our mind and also spending some time just listening to what He might be saying to us.

We might not be able to join each other in church or in each other's houses for the breaking of bread but in new ways, with many thanks to Hazel for her ingenuity and her hard work we are able to share in services remotely by audio recordings, by photo copies and by videos on YouTube.

Our two church bubble has been receiving the same services. Together with the Zoom meetings for all of us and for our joint online coffee and chat as well as our joint Home Groups which means we have been growing closer together.

As a joint fellowship in our bubble we have probably spent more quality time with each other since we have not been able to get into church.

People looking out for each other. Contacting to see if there is anything that they can do, buying food, collecting medicines etc. and just having more and deeper conversations. Really getting to know people we rarely talk to even at coffee after a service.

We are demonstrating that we are a loving, caring community. Now can we do more and can we show this to our friends and neighbours. Can we be more generous with our time to meet the needs of others?

Where the passage talks of holding all things in common for us today might mean that all we have, we offer to be used for the good of others if called upon.

Having the courage to let go of things and use the money to help others.

I know how difficult this is for me and a challenge that I rarely have to face because I give out of relative plenty.

In Mark chapter twelve it says ⁴¹ Jesus sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³ Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴ For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

What a challenge it is to be like the widow who gave her last two copper coins to the service of God leaving her with nothing and relying on God for everything.

As we move forward together in our bubble we might not sell all our goods but we can certainly use our financial possessions to help those in need.

And we can have generous hearts.

Looking out for where we can help the lonely, the isolated, the displaced, the lost, the oppressed, the sick and all those in need.

It will be in our church bubble that we learn together the will of God and where we develop our relationships together and where we build up our courage and we develop our ways of taking God's word out into West Wickham and to wherever each of us goes.

As we go out into West Wickham we know that our membership is few and of a certain age but we must remember that the seventy sent out by Jesus were few and they had a huge impact on the people that they met and they changed the world. Surely our few can change our town and let everyone know the Kingdom of God has come near to them.

I am sure that if we want to do more in the community then God will provide the people to help us in His work. More labourers for His harvest.

As Tom Wright the past Bishop of Durham has written 'Where the church today finds itself stagnant, unattractive, humdrum, and shrinking it's time for us all to read and reread the passage from Acts, then get down on our knees

and ask what isn't happening that should be happening. The gospel hasn't changed, God's power hasn't diminished. People still need rescuing. What are we doing about it?'

Surely having endured this time of upheaval to our lives it is time to look forward to a new future. We mustn't let our bubble burst but take up every opportunity that God puts in our path.

Amen

Prayer Pointers

For our two congregations of St Mary's and St Francis. May we seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to enable us to work together as 'one bubble' working to bring Christ's message of compassion, love and care for our community.

For our local businesses who have been unable to trade for the last three months as they prepare to open after lockdown. For those who are struggling to pay bills and have had to lay off their staff.

For Governments across the world as they gradually allow life to return to some kind of normality. For all who advise them on how to deal with Covid19. May all their decisions be wise, balanced and for the common good.

For all those who are still shielding, especially those in our congregations, and afraid of the consequences of leaving their homes. May they bring their fear to God in prayer and trust in him to protect them.

For harmony in our communities especially in race relations. We pray that all may be valued especially in our churches. May all who feel marginalised know that God's love is for everyone and may we in St Mary's and St Francis be sensitive and inclusive in our care and worship.