

Dear Friends

I said last month in my letter that the church council are working on some planning and reflection under the headings of 'Worship,' 'Mission' and 'Discipleship,' and last month I wrote about the worship of God being a while life activity, or posture, rather than just a Sunday thing.

This month, PCC will be looking at another heading: *Discipleship*. For those for whom this is a 'churchy' word, it is basically short-hand for encouraging one another's faith, building each another up in faith, praying with and for one another, learning from each other and teaching each other, challenging each other and setting examples for each other. Traditionally, disciples were those who sought to learn from their rabbi and do everything as he did and learn from his teaching. It's an individual and corporate action whereby we are disciples of Jesus, just like the Twelve were when Jesus was alive.

In Acts chapter 2 we read:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

Here we have just one particular snapshot from one particular time of what that looked like. But just like with worship, it is clear that being a disciple isn't just a Sunday thing. It seems instead to be a really life-changing and challenging thing. The church *devoted* themselves to the apostles teaching (i.e. teaching about the scriptures and the stories about Jesus) and to fellowship, which included communion and prayers. They spent loads of time in the temple together, but also praised God at home. This snapshot feels quite a long way removed from some of our Christian faith today.

That's what the church council will be discussing. How can we help each other to understand the Bible and apply it to today; to fall in love with the stories of Jesus and of God's great acts in history? How can we help each other to pray, expecting to be heard? How can we encourage each other and share stories of what God does day by day in each of our lives? How can we learn our faith together, challenge each other, and be examples of faith to each other?

All this is important - not so that we support a flawed institution, or so we produce a more moral society - it is important because as God's people, surely we would want to know God better, be more in tune with the God we worship, take our place within the family of God, and seek to build up our brothers and sisters in Jesus in their faith? Discipleship means that collectively and individually we are a people who follow Jesus, emulating him and helping others to grow in faith too.

How do you feel about this devotion to Jesus, his teaching, and the life of his church? What would help you in your faith? What would help you to understand the Bible as you read it at home? What would help you pray? How can your following of Jesus become a natural thing that takes place every day, each day bringing you closer to God? I'd love to hear your thoughts, but also I'd love to know you were thinking and praying about it.

Steve