

A few words from the Vicar

Last month, I wrote about Church growth. What do I mean by that?

Obviously, I'm not talking about adding an extension to our lovely church building! I like our church building just as it is. Why? Well, for me, it is not just any old building; it is holy ground, what some call a 'thin place' where it is easier to feel God's presence. Sometimes, if I call in mid-week, I find myself kneeling at the communion rail, praying or simply being still in God's presence.

The Church comprises those people who have faith in Jesus. So, when I speak of Church growth, I am talking about two interrelated things: the numerical growth that comes as others come to know the love of Jesus for themselves; and the individual and collective spiritual growth that comes if we take our discipleship seriously. Both are important and, in both cases, there is no quick fix.

At Easter we celebrate God's saving work, from creation through to Jesus' death and resurrection. As we celebrate Christ's victory over death and sin, we are drawn to God's love and mercy and what it means for us.

We are reminded that, on the cross, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, and that through Jesus we have love, forgiveness and new life. No matter how far we have strayed from God, no matter how heavy our burden of guilt, through Jesus we can experience God's forgiveness and his overwhelming love for us. Through Jesus we can know the saving love of God in our lives.

None of this is meant to be a secret. It is wonderfully good news to be shared with others, in the hope that they will come to experience for themselves the reality of God's forgiveness and his overwhelming love.

Jesus wants us to tell everyone of his love for them and to be his love in the world. So, no matter how hesitant we are, we should not be afraid to share our faith with others. Easier said than done, I know, given our cultural reticence when it comes to discussing matters of faith. Yet, eloquence is not required. Neither is our own perfection for, as a Sri Lankan Methodist Minister (DT Niles) said many years ago, telling others about the love of Jesus' is nothing more than *"one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread."*

Obviously, we need to be sensitive and avoid becoming pests, but how will others learn about the love of God if we don't tell them?

Another obvious point. The message we deliver needs to be consistent with our actions, for actions speak louder than words. If we take our discipleship seriously, as we grow in faith, it ought to be possible for others to see something of Jesus' love reflected in our words and actions. And, as others look at the Church, they ought to see evidence of loving service within the local community and beyond.

None of this is rocket science. Neither are the good habits that help us grow in faith shrouded in mystery, for they have been tried and tested over generations. This is about attending worship regularly, and spending time in prayer and reading our Bibles. In this way, we become better equipped to reflect Jesus' love in our day to day lives.

Taking full advantage of the opportunities for spiritual growth offered by this Church is important too. For example, you could come along to 'First Friday' or sign up for our new Alpha course (announcement soon).

Every Blessing

Dave