

Minister's Letter February 2018. NPURC and WEUC.

What is a disciple? The word 'disciple' means a follower. In a Christian context it means a follower of Jesus. And as people of faith, we are all called to be disciples- but the word is not a passive one, it is meant to be active. The United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church are both encouraging their members to access the series entitled 'Holy Habits'. As the book review says: 'The call to Christian discipleship is a call to adventure. *Holy Habits* explores this adventure through a rich mix of biblical material and inspiring stories. The life-giving, transforming role of ten habits seen in Acts 2 are re-imagined for personal and community life today. The ten habits are: biblical teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, giving, service, eating together, gladness and generosity, worship and the making of more disciples.' From late May for 20 weeks the United Area is running a series based around these 10 Holy Habits to help us all to grow in faith, fellowship and confidence. It is designed to help us as we seek to follow Christ and learn more about our faith, God, ourselves, others and how to live in this 21st century world where secularism is more prevalent than religion.

Jesus came and chose his followers from ordinary folk. He didn't go for the movers and shakers of the time, but those who were able to relate to everyday people, in everyday situations, living everyday lives; those whom society would either overlook or struggle to find a good word about! And those followers were transformed by the encounters and experiences they had.

We are just ordinary folk, we have the same struggles the early followers of Jesus had. We have the balance of seeking to live in the world that is dominated by money, status, materialism, self-promotion and insularity whilst believing in a God who loves the whole of creation and desires the best for all and calls us to live this out. God calls us to look out for others, seek the common good, live the love we receive and seek to be the change we want to see. And at times it is so hard to do. We get wrapped up in our own lives, we are happy doing the good turns, the kind acts, but can find it hard to articulate what the driver is of our actions and words. We know how God loves us and the difference this can mean to us personally, but we can find it hard to share this in conversations with others and to say it in a way that does not come across as triumphalist or exclusivist or weird! And we can also feel that everyone else has the understanding or depth of faith that we lack and so we avoid situations where we talk about our faith as we do not want to look stupid or a 'lesser' Christian. Do you know what? We all feel like that!! Whatever depth of learning or faith we have there are always questions, there are always doubts, and there is always more to learn and more of God to be revealed to us. Faith is a journey, not a destination....

As churches we can get bogged down with buildings, rotas, furniture moving and finances. And yet if we stop and reflect for a moment, what is Church? Church is the people NOT the building and NOT just the Sunday morning congregation. At NPURC we have a 5 week series beginning on Sunday 18th February at 6pm looking at Church. Please come along and join in our discussions around what is Church and how can we more effectively share with others what our faith in Jesus is all about and share the love of God more widely. 18th February: Jesus vs Church- what are we worshipping? 25th February: Findings about Church for 20-40s (and those who appreciate Jesus but not church!). 4th March: What are the implications of all this? 11th March: Story of Jesus through the Gospels- is it about Church? What is the story all about? 18th March: What do we need to think about? (How do we make the church Jesus shaped?) If you cannot come along, look out for the United Area series beginning in May and see how you can engage with that.

We are followers, learners, people of the Way, disciples. God calls us to share our faith through how we live and it is only when we feed our faith can it truly grow and flourish and God's way becomes our way.

Blessings, Jenny.