

2nd August 2020 10am The Body of Christ

Service led by Lindsey Attwood, talks by Chris Waters and Penny Bryans

Readings by Karen Jackson and Ellie Bryans

Transcript only of notices, readings and talks

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Extract from Notices

Andrew has a notice to give, but he's given it to me to read out. It's all about what's actually going to be happening with the church at the minute with the whole COVID thing. So this is from him and from the wardens as well.

We've had the church open for private prayer now for two weeks, and are keen to review this very soon, before taking any further steps to use this space in other ways. We are trying to be cautious throughout this process, and would rather be accused of being too slow, keeping everybody safe, than being too quick, potentially risking the spread of infection. We are now working towards a plan, the opening up of the church buildings next term, whilst keeping within the government and CofE guidelines with all the necessary health and safety precautions in place. The most obvious and achievable first step will be the introduction of an 8am service of morning prayer in September, limiting numbers of attendees very carefully. As we grow more familiar with safety procedures, and the challenge to make services meaningful in these circumstances, other options will be explored, taking into account the limitations of space and the constraints of social distancing. We shall also begin to consult with hall users to help us find a safe way forward with the various groups who have used the halls. Your patience at this time is very much appreciated.

And that's from Andrew and the wardens. So hopefully that will offer some encouragement and some movement forward in September.

First reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 [NIVUK 1984]

[Karen Jackson:]

¹² The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,

²³ and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are

unpresentable are treated with special modesty,²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it,²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

First Talk – by Chris Waters

Morning everyone!

I'd just like to say what a privilege it is to come before you this morning and bring this talk. For those of you that don't know me, my name is Chris. I'm a self-employed landscaper and throughout my job God often speaks to me about various analogies and stuff. I do a bit of gardening as well and I'm often about, pruning and things like that, but I felt God say to me once, about the sort of structure of the church, and, like, sub-base. You know, underneath patios you have compacted stone and under roads and paths and things like that and pavements, wherever we go, actually, we're walking on top of this stuff. It might well be the most boring analogy to describe but I believe that there's a message in this somewhere, and here we go!

So, Karen's just read to you about unity and diversity in the body, and about not trying to be a hand if you're actually a foot, and stuff like that. And I'm going to show you what I'm talking about now this sub base is called MOT Roadstone. And here it is, some of it is, it's just a little sample. So I don't know what you can see of this, but it's basically made up of all different shapes and sizes. There's some really big bits, sort of medium bits.



There's some small bits and there's some absolutely tiny bits and each one is unique, and each one is different. The idea is you you you lay a certain amount of this, and then you put like a compaction plate over it. And it all compresses and jiggles and wiggles around with all the vibration and everything, and it forms an absolute rock-solid base upon which to build. The analogy of church and stuff is how we're all different and unique and how we all can support each other. And actually, there's real strength in our sort of diversity, and the fact that we're all unique and we all have a part to play. So this bit here, you know, wouldn't be so strong, unless it was supported by this little bit here. And it all forms this sort of jigsaw.

And if you think of, well, like a grain silo or quicksand, where all the particles are of similar size and shape, I've got another thing to show you here with some sugar because I haven't got any grain in front of me or anything like that. If you take



some sugar – now I'm sure if you looked at this under a microscope somebody would tell me that every one is different and everything, but basically the particles all have a similar size. So if I put some sugar in this glass cup. And if I was to, say, force a spoon through it, it's actually really easy, it just falls through, there's not a lot of sort of integrity to it.

But when you have this diversity all pushed together, all supporting each other, it's like when I've laid a sub-base, when you can sort of smack it with your foot, and it's just absolutely rock solid. And the strength in it is incredible.

I've drawn a picture here. Maybe I'll explain that a bit more, but it's a sub-base: it's absolutely rammed full of bits. There's not a single void. Obviously there is in my drawing, but when it gets pressure on it, and vibration, it all compresses together, and there's absolutely no gaps in this at all.



Whereas if you take something like, well, like a grain silo or a ball pit, or anything like that, there's all these little gaps. And it's actually quite unstable. We know about the dangers of grain silos and quicksand, you know, as soon as you alter the structure of it by adding too much water, it's completely unstable. And we know the scripture in the Bible: it says about the wise man built his house on the rock, and the foolish man on the sand.



What I'm trying to say is basically how we're all different. And that it's amazing that we're all different, and we're not supposed to be the same. This [pebble] could be a foot. This [pebble] could be a hand. But it's supposed to be different. And don't try and be what you're not! God's called you to be unique. You're different for a reason. And we all need each other, we all know it's good that we're all different. There's something about creation: it shouts all over the place. I mean, God's so amazing that every snowflake is different. All of our fingerprints are different. Things that you wouldn't even think mattered, but they're different, they're unique. And I think sometimes people aspire to be certain things, but maybe they're not called to be that. And it's incredible, really, how we all need each other and can support each other.

Now, I guess the analogy falls down in one sense because you've got this piece here, it doesn't stay there. So, say this little piece of here is me. I might well be affected by somebody over here. Let's say this is Jane. And Jane's obedient to the Lord: she hears a message from God and gives it to me. And that message did actually change my life. That might sound quite over the top, but in every way, in all my relationships, in my finances and everything, because she heard the Lord and was obedient, and she was unique and different, and she was exercising her calling, it actually affected me.

So I don't just affect the people around me and then me. It's like this: we can all – we're stronger together, working together. And it's incredible. I know the Bible says about imitating leaders, which is right. But I don't think it means that we all have to look and dress and sound and try and be exactly their anointing, I think it's talking about a leader of good integrity and character, and imitating those sorts of things.

So what about COVID and things like that? I mean, you might think well, it's tough at the moment being Church, and how can we express ourselves? Don't ever forget, we're still the body of Christ, and we are still anointed. We've got a part to play, and even more so in some ways, where people are perhaps searching and stuff. And so you being unique, there's only one of you, you're essential, and I hope this encourages people today, that, you know, you're special. I need a Jane in my life. I need a Bob in my life. There's a certain Bob that helps me to think differently, that encourages me. I need a Lindsey. If I miss a few Life groups, I might just get a little WhatsApp message from Lindsey and it would

just say, "Oh, we missed you tonight, Chris. Hope you're okay?" Just simple like that. And it's surprising how it can really encourage you.

I remember coming to a carol service at church some time ago, back in the days when we could all meet. And I was struggling a little bit, to be honest. The singing was great, everybody was wonderful, everybody was playing their part and being unique. But I kind of just sat at the back and I didn't have my family with me (That's another story). And everybody was with their families or friends and stuff and I was just sat at the back on my I own, and, you know, it was great and Andrew preached the most amazing message, Gospel message, and that was it for me, I loved that. But at the end of the service, somebody in my Life group came up to me and just sort of, you know, just said some lovely words to me. And that really encouraged me, and also Andrew at the end, when I was about to leave, he didn't know what was going on in my mind, but the Holy Spirit knew. And he just, we had a hug. And he just said, "Good to see you, brother." And actually, as I was feeling, sort of, there without my family, it was something wonderful! And I think, wow, isn't that amazing! You know, God's used one us, one of the body to encourage somebody else. We don't all know what each of us is feeling, when you think like that, but it's incredible how God can use us and speak through us and it can do so much.

I've got a great friend who is definitely anointed to look after single mums trying to bring up kids, and stuff like that. And she's got a real anointing and a heart for this, and I was saying one day to her over the phone, "Oh, it'd be great to get all those young ladies into church and, you know, see them get saved and everything." And it dawned on me, isn't it incredible that actually, you are doing Church with those girls, you are showing the love of Christ to those girls, to those young women, showing them how to be a mum, loving unconditionally, giving of yourself, your time, your experience, and there's not even a Bible in sight. You know, yes it'd be great, one day they will come to church, but it's through love, it is through our actions, it is through us imitating Christ. I said to her, "You are being Christ to those young women." And it's funny how they have come on and started to think a lot more about Jesus, and they see Christ on this person's life, of course. And I just think it's wonderful that there's an example where... I know, with COVID there's distance and things like that, but the Holy Spirit will anoint you, will show you who to encourage, what to say, where to go, what to do, be yourself, be unique, enjoy being saved, enjoy salvation.

We are stronger together, unique, all different sizes and shapes. The Church is a stable, a good, healthy body, filled with people of different ages, different characters, different abilities, different anointings, all working together, stronger. Think how the geese fly long distances, how they all form that V, and they all carry a bit of the load, and maybe they swap over or like cyclists going in a line, wind-cheating or whatever it's called. And we carry the load and our Life group is doing this service this morning, and one of our members is hurting quite badly with family issues and things, and probably he would have taken on some of the service this morning, but he wasn't able to, and I hope and pray for God's order and peace in that whole situation, but others of us have come together and worked this out, and I believe God spoke to me and said, "Chris, you know, do that this morning," so here we all are, supporting each other, all working together. And hopefully, bringing glory to God and expanding the Kingdom.

I don't know if I've missed anything out, but that's basically it. So a fairly short kind of talk, but I hope that you're encouraged. "Don't give up meeting together," the Bible says, but obviously it's tricky at the moment, but there's lots of ways that we can encourage each other still, and, you know, keep going for God!

Amen.

Second Reading: John 6:5-13 [NIV]

[Ellie Bryans:]

⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” ⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ⁹ “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

¹⁰ Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Second talk – Penny Bryans

Hello, good morning. I'd like to follow on from Chris and focus on just one person. This is one of the best-known miracles that Jesus did, showing how he cared for the many people who were following Him: how he took the little that was offered to Him to do great things. And I'd like to look at the person, the lad, who offered up the food, because I think he's a good example to us. So, first of all, who is he? We don't know a lot about him. It says “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they among so many?” This miracle is included in each of the four Gospels. Only in John do we find out that the food belongs to a lad. And in each of the others, the person to whom the food belongs isn't even mentioned. That's how important he is: only in one gospel is he mentioned, but Jesus used his offering to perform a miracle that is so significant, it is included in each of the gospels. The word ‘lad’ indicates that he's not an adult. He was old enough to be part of the crowd following Jesus. And he was following close enough to Jesus in this large crowd for the disciples to have noticed him. That's pretty much all we know. We're not told his name. He is a nobody. I don't mean that he's a nobody in Jesus' eyes, obviously in the eyes of his mother and father, but just generally in society.

What did he do? Well, I don't think that actually he did a lot really. First of all, he was following Jesus, and following fairly closely in that crowd of 5,000 men, besides women and children. He must have either heard that Jesus and the disciples were talking about food and come up, or maybe they saw him with what he had. He must have offered or agreed to share the food he was carrying, perhaps without knowing if, or how much, he was going to get back.

And why is he mentioned at all? I think he was mentioned because he is a good example to us. He was following Jesus. He was willing and able to give Jesus what he had. Did Jesus use a synagogue leader's banquet to perform this miracle, or some other important person? Did He create food out of thin air? He could have done either or any number of other things, but He didn't. He used the offering brought by this lad.

What could we take from this? Jesus can and does use normal people and what they have to do mighty miracles. This nameless lad had no standing in society, no

back-story, just a young person following Jesus. We are normal people, most of us are not important in our society. We can however all follow Jesus, just as that lad was doing. And I want to stress that he was young. We must not underestimate the importance of every single person in the body of Christ. Are you five years old? Are you 8 to 9, 10 or 11? Are you at secondary school? Have you left school? And do you have a job yet? Are you at university? Are you working? Do you have family? Do you live by yourself? Are you retired? Jesus has made it possible for all of us to be with Him, to be close to Him.

Jesus' death on the Cross, a sacrifice for all our sin, means we can be forgiven, and no longer separated from Him because of our sin. We can all be close enough to Jesus. So, when He wants to use us, to carry or make use of the things that we have, we can be in the right place at the right time. We must not think that our age is a problem for Jesus, or how important we are. Jesus wants us, just like that lad. He wants you. And He wants me. Just as we are, following Him, listening to Him, hearing what He says, sharing what we have with Him. We can share our time, our longings, our food, our money with Him, and then He can use us and our things as He sees fit. He chose that lad's food to perform a miracle that has never been forgotten. What will He choose to do with me, with us?

So I'd like to encourage us to keep close to Jesus, close enough to hear Him, close enough to see what He's up to, and to be able to share what we have with Him and find out what He wants to do with us.

Thank you.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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