

Ray Slade May 15 2011
Acts 2 42-47

I am going to start today with a joke. I am telling you it's a joke in case you don't recognize it as such. Otherwise a card with LAUGH NOW is needed.

Here goes. An inflatable boy went one day into his inflatable school carrying a sharp pin. He met his inflatable teacher. The boy used his pin. He was duly reprimanded by his teacher. 'Son, you've let me down, you've let your school down, but worst of all **you've let yourself down.**'

Hold onto that thought please!!

Turn please to Acts 2 42-47 on p 1033

I will read it again

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

An astonishingly positive and hopeful picture of the very first Christian community. Straight after Pentecost. How does our church today compare?

On Tuesday of last week I was in one of our diocese schools supporting the governors in attempting to appoint a new head. It was unsuccessful and this is often the case. Sadly because these 130+ schools are a vital way of communicating 'church' and Christian living to our children. We are fortunate to have 2 schools in our parish that do just that.

Very prominent in this school was a huge display entitled '**Living God's Love**' – that school's response to the initiative, **the vision**, we now have in the diocese. It featured right at the start of our parish Profile. We have cards about it in the church.

It breaks into three sections:

1. Getting deeper into God
2. Transforming our community
3. Making new disciples.

Let's look at the way that first community did exactly that and then let's determine that our response will be similar.

Living God's Love. Getting Deeper into God.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. REPEAT

Look at those factors:

- **Teaching and learning** – the apostles explained it all to them, they learned from that. Today we have their teaching in scripture so we too can read, study, learn, understand.
- **Fellowship and worship**– they were together, they enjoyed each others' company as they worshipped together (in the temple courts as it says, and in their homes.) Like us they had **church** and **home groups** for study and prayer, for fellowship, for worship. One can assume that there was formal type worship and a freer form in their homes.
Fellowship and worship, (even eating together – another plug for lunch with JJ).
- **Prayer.** They prayed- alone, together, in worship and in private. Prayer was their life blood. **Let's make it ours too.** We have been meeting for prayer at 7.30am on Wednesdays. Vacancy Prayers! That may not suit everyone so let us know. But come if you can this Wednesday. I have no doubt that prayer together will be part of our future.

Are we, like those Jerusalem Christians, getting deeper into God?

Living God's Love. Transforming Communities.

We see how those first believers transformed their community in Jerusalem. They were astonishingly generous. They sold things and gave to help the poor. They had everything in common so it freed up resources. They gave. And it had, not surprisingly a dramatic effect – they found favour with all.

Later we will give time to pray for Christian Aid and those involved in the CA collections. The generosity of those first Christians is a huge challenge as we think of our global community of 7B people. 1B (inc us) have an income of 13k+, 1B 1k-. What are those of us who claim to 'Live God's Love' doing about it?

Our community too needs to be helped, even transformed, by **living God's love** out there. Giving hope where, for some, there is little.

Visiting, enabling, facilitating, providing and not just with an overtly 'getting more people into church' in mind. That will follow.

We should see it as a privilege to be able to help transform our local community and others far less well off. That's what our Jerusalem fellowship did.

Finally Living God's Love. Making New Disciples

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved

The sight of folk getting deep into God and of generously transforming communities brings folk in. We must welcome them, share Christ's love with them, see them become changed people serving God for themselves.

It was sad to hear of the death of David Wilkinson this week. His 1960s book 'The Cross and the Switchblade' tells of the remarkable things God did through him with violent gangs in the US. Lives changed, communities transformed, disciples won. Do we dare to take the same kind of 'godly' risks that he did with folk in our community? Even with those who do not appear 'nice'. We might just be surprised.

We are to make new disciples like our 'role models' did. And it's a job for all of us, not just the professionals!

So that's how the first Christians **Lived God's Love**, and a few hints as to how we might emulate their commitment. It will be important to explore this more fully this vision in the months and years ahead. It is a major initiative which is going to dominate a great deal of our thinking and work.

The word **vision** is interesting. It's popular today. Hear this quote attributed to **Nelson Mandela**

A vision without action is just a dream; an action without a vision just passes time; a vision with an action changes the world.

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If that dream of living God's love (like the Jerusalem community of Christians) leads to actions of getting in deeper, transforming community, making new disciples then we really will change, if not the world, then certainly Broxbourne with Wormley.

May we all pray and work towards this and may we, coming back to the joke of the start, pray that we don't **let ourselves down or anyone else down.**

Living God's Love prayer.