

Vicar's Letter #12: 5 June, 2020

Dear Parishioners

This Sunday is Trinity Sunday. On Trinity Sunday we celebrate God's awesome, loving, relational nature. God is a being in communion, one God in three 'persons' so to speak. God has reached out to us through Jesus, and has come to live in us through God's Holy Spirit. When we obey Jesus' teaching, when we are guided by God's Holy Spirit, we are truly responding to God. How gracious God is to make God's being known to us like this!

The Gospel reading for this Sunday contains what is known as the Great Commission, which Jesus gave to his followers before his Ascension.

Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

This Gospel passage is one of the most significant mission statements for the Church expressed in the Bible. Because Jesus has all authority from God the Father, we are called to do what Jesus says - to make disciples of all nations, to baptise in God's name, to obey Jesus ourselves and to teach others to obey his commandments. Of course, as we do this we remember that his commandments are not burdensome, but are life-giving. They are for our good and the good of all God's world.

On Sunday 14 June, I plan to baptise a man who has come to faith as a visitor to our country. Chang has attended our 10am service and more recently he has been a member of our Mandarin-language small group, led by Junee Xiao. In keeping with the Great Commission, Chang, and his son, will be baptised in the name of the God who has been revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

How exciting it is when new people come to faith! It reminds us of the preciousness of the relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ, and the honour of having God living inside us through God's Holy Spirit! We have indeed been richly blessed in knowing and serving the God who is love and truth and life and light.

In this new season, when we hold discipleship, togetherness and reaching the local community as key values for our Christian life together, it will be encouraging to baptise a new disciple of Christ who wants to follow in Christ's way himself and teach his son to do the same. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to commend God to others. We do this in all sorts of ways, by our words, by our actions and by the character and priorities with which we live our lives. I pray that we will grow as a parish in our ability to share our faith with our families, our friends and our neighbours in our local community, not because we think that we are obliged to do so by God, but because we know the value of the life we have been given in Jesus Christ, because the Holy Spirit is at work in us, and because we seek to live lives that honour God the Father.

These baptisms remind us how significantly God has been at work in our parish community even when the doors of our church buildings have been closed. And when our church buildings are open for worship again at Alert Level 1, God will continue to be at work outside the walls of our churches, as well as inside them. I hope that time comes very soon, because I can't wait to celebrate with you in person the goodness and faithfulness of God the Holy and Blessed Trinity!

With my warm greetings in Christ.

Peter Bengé

Vicar
(Anglican Parish of Lower Hutt)