

We have, in the two readings that we heard this morning, the theme of building God's field, building God's kingdom.

Building God's kingdom is all about mission and of course God's mission is all about transformation - transforming individual lives, transforming communities and transforming the world. We are all called to be part of God's mission by living and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, through the communities we belong to and identify with.

In 1 Corinthians 3.1-9, Paul begins by referring to the already dramatically changed individuals, who together make up the new community, as immature. Their disunity, rivalry, jealousy and quarrelling lead him to comment that it's as if they're still restricted to baby food. He knows that they've come a long way from their old pagan beliefs, but he also acknowledges that they still have a lot of growing-up to do. This they must do before they will be ready to appreciate the significance of being part of a mature fellowship of Jesus Christ. Maturity, it seems, is about not getting side-tracked onto the importance of individual teachers (e.g. Paul or Apollos), but instead being able to focus only on Christ.

Paul uses another metaphor to try to fire the Corinthians' imagination and to inspire, he tells them, 'you are God's field. Again Paul shows the importance of his Jewish heritage, drawing on the image of Israel as God's vineyard. In Isaiah it is God who plants the vineyard and it is God who sends the rain to give new life. Paul is clear, that his own work of founding the church in Corinth, and the subsequent work of Apollos were no less the work of God, who alone gives the growth. Neither planting or watering alone would do any good.

How do we as a Church and as individuals help to grow the church?

We are all different people, we each do things in different ways, but we are called to work alongside each other and support each other as we share God's word. We, each of us, have gifts to bring, some plant, others water, but all of us have the ongoing task to be God's servants in the world, to grow the church. Building up the church, growing God's kingdom, isn't a solitary task, we need to recognise that being the Church is a collective enterprise, it's not the

responsibility of just a few people, or just the clergy! If we believe in building a church community to reflect God's love to future generations, to inspire them, we must each ask ourselves, what is **my part** in making this happen?

Many people identify themselves with this church in the centre of the village, how ideally we are placed. In fact, you would be surprised at the number of people who visit during the week. Not just tourists but people who work and live here. Candles are lit, prayers are said, & then the rhythm of daily life continues. People come to give thanks, to pray for their family, friends and themselves, to sit and to be, to take time out of a busy day.

If the church community is to have any meaning or provide hope or comfort to others, it will only come as result of contact with us. We **cannot** just attend church, we must **be the church** and demonstrate this as we live and work in this village. We need to take the church **out** into the community as well as inviting the community in.

As we look at back at the Christian presence that has been in this village, in this community, since 675 we are reminded that this is not just God's story but it is our story tooand we mustn't forget that, though I am sure that we will be reminded about that quite a bit over the next year!

As we take God's love out into the community this week, think about the words of **Teresa of Ávila** a Spanish Carmelite nun who lived in the 1500s and had given her life to Jesus - she said these words

“Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours, Yours are the eyes with which He looks with compassion on this world, Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good, Yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world.

How are you going to share it this week?