

From the Rector

Have you ever wondered what goes on in a church service on a Sunday morning? Or why we do the things that we do in church? Well this month you will have an ideal opportunity to find out. On Sunday 8th June (The feast of Pentecost – the birthday of the worldwide church) we will be having an instructed Eucharist as part of our 9.30am service, where each part of the service will be explained as we go along. From the robes that I wear, to the things that we say together and the actions as we remember the Last Supper. I encourage you to come along and find out more and maybe bring a friend with you. There will be time after the service to ask questions and to find out more.

You might spot the icon (picture) up by the altar of a saint from the early church that we hear about in the Acts of the Apostles, a book in the New Testament which describes the events of the early church in the days after the Ascension (when Jesus returned to heaven after the resurrection) This icon is of St Barnabas who the church remembers on 11th June. His real name was Joseph, a wealthy Levite from Cyprus. However, he was better known by his nickname which means *‘Son of Encouragement’* (Acts 4:36). Throughout Acts we see him encouraging others in different ways.

Barnabas was an example of *generous giving* (Acts 4:36-7), when he sold property and offered the money to the church for those in need. In the midst of an already caring and sharing community, he was singled out as a symbol of generosity. Are we known as somebody who is generous to those in need around us?

Barnabas later *encouraged a new Christian* in the person of Paul (Acts 9:27). After Paul’s conversion and knowing his reputation, Barnabas came alongside him and brought him into the fellowship of the church. Are we ready to help those who are new in the faith to find a place in our church?

Finally, Barnabas was sent to the church in Antioch where he *‘saw* *the evidence of the grace of God’*(Acts 11:23). It was a church which brought Jewish and Gentile believers together for the first time. Like Barnabas, do we rejoice when we see God doing new things in people’s lives? Are we also willing to embrace these things and facilitate change?

Encouragement is one of the spiritual gifts in the New Testament (Romans 12:8). It can be greatly undervalued but still is crucial in growing the church. Like Barnabas, will we nurture gifting; strengthen the doubters and those tempted to give up; show generosity to God’s people and beyond the church; alongside strengthening people to move beyond their own comfort zones to help those in need?

Let’s be prepared to ask the following questions: *‘Are there people alongside us who will encourage us?’* and *‘How can we be encouragers to others?’*

With many blessings

Fr David