***Service … a holy muddle***

The habit of serving must not be seen in isolation,

* Must be integrated and informed by biblical teaching, supported in fellowship, prayer and often is around eating.
* Service is an expression of gladness and is the natural working out of prayer.
* If there is no service, then the church will die

As Pope Francis writes

You pray for the hungry,

then you feed them,

this is how prayer works.

***Questions for consideration.***

* How could you let your community know that you/we are praying or them?
* As a disciple of Jesus, how do you ‘operate’ or serve?
* How do people in the community know what we do to serve our community?

Excerpts from

**Roberts Andrew** *Holy Habits*, Malcolm Down Publishing 2016

Developing Holy Habits

**6. Service**

**The Adventure of Discipleship**

Discipleship is an adventure, but there will be days when we are more enthusiastic about it and others when we would rather do spiritual equivalent of snuggling back under the duvet !

**The Aim of Discipleship**

The aim of Discipleship is to develop within ourselves a ‘Christ like character‘ as a focus to enable the transformation of the world, so the Kingdom of God can a visible and tangible presence here on earth. Discipleship is personal and relational. It flows from the relationship we have with the one who calls us to follow, Jesus.

**Sacrificial nature of Discipleship**

Sacrifice is at the heart of discipleship and suffering, and to a greater or less extent, it is inevitable on the adventure. Jesus was not slow in challenging Simon Peter and his companions to go beyond their experience and comfort zones, thereby helping them grow in confidence. Sometimes in our discipleship there will be those moments when we are called to go beyond our comfort zones and discover Gods resources in new ways, and there will be times when we need to encourage others to take steps of faith on the adventure of discipleship. However living sacrificially, in obedience to the call of Jesus, may also involve suffering because of our association with the one we follow. This could be in the form of snide comments, being excluded from conversation or activities, or to stand alongside the people whom the rest of society would exclude.

**The Nurture of Discipleship**

As we practice the art of discipleship, so the fruits of holiness and Christ like character emerge and blossom, along with resilience, strength and faith to keep going. We need to learn to live rhythmically if we are to nurture 10 Holy Habits.

**Holy Habits**

If we are to commit ourselves and to encourage our church community to live rhythmically and develop discipleship, then we need guidelines; we need to develop tools to enable us to be ‘Christ like’ in character and focus. In other words, to develop and nurture ‘habits’ and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us on the adventure and excitement of discipleship.

**The Fifth Holy Habit is Service.**

**What words come to mind when you think of service?**

**Are you being served?**

* **Mission** is one of the key elements of serving.
* It involves a relationship with another person or situation where we demonstrate **God’s love in action**.
* It is through our mission that we are changed by our **encounters with others** for it is often in them that we meet the ‘otherness’ of God.
* Yet as Christians we need to recognise the **Living Christ** in our service. So it is the presence of Jesus that forms us as disciples as we serve and engage in Gods mission.
* Practising this Holy Habit is an **evangelistic act** in the literal sense of being and bringing the good news. It also opens the way for people to encounter the risen Jesus for themselves.

*A dying church reborn…*

***Stoneycroft United Reformed Church,*** *a* dying church asked the question

 ‘*How could we serve you Lord and the community’?*

*Incarnational Mission*

* The word became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood
* The danger of disconnection, means that we must always have a compassionate heart and desire to change and adapt to the circumstances around us.
* ‘Christ like hospitality’ is radical

**Service God’s special concern for the poor**

* Whilst affirming that God’s love is for all, there can be no escaping that in reading the Bible we see God has a special heart for the poorest in society. It is abundantly clear when we read the prophets, bur especially when reading the Gospel stories. Luke has the clearest message and is sometimes called the **Nazareth manifesto**
* We are called to be ‘**Christ like’**, that doesn’t mean to be perfect, but to be aware of the needs of those who are the poor in our world and our society. The good news is that many churches are acting and living prophetically which give fresh expressions of movement and energy serving their local community; Churches must respond in new and imaginative ways to touch the hearts of the poor, as many hearts have become ‘hardened’ to love.