

to share Jesus' love with others – all of which we see patterned in Jesus' own life and ministry. But also the Church should be loving Jesus back for the love he has shown to us.

An image that Jesus used was to think of his Church as his family; he hinted at that in the words from Luke we had read: *My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.* The Church as a family, a special family, the family of Jesus, sits well alongside Paul's picture of the Church as the Body of Christ. If the Church is Jesus' family then each member of that family should live bearing the family characteristic of love; living, loving and working together to make that love known.

Seeing the Church at the moment on ZOOM rather than in this building reminds us of the truth that the Church is people, not the building. And making ZOOM services happen has needed the qualities and abilities of various people coming together (and many of those qualities and abilities are not found in the Rector!) Our on line Church is larger in number than if we had been meeting in this building, or any of others, which should give us food for thought.

Lockdown, keeping us out of the Churches, has reminded us of the truth that the Church is people. People giving of their qualities and abilities so the Church can be the Body of Christ to the world, to be the family of Jesus living out his love.

What is Church? It is you and I, and what we are willing to bring of ourselves into its life. If we keep this in mind when we can start to use the buildings again we will not get side-tracked and we will become more and more the Church Jesus wants us to be.

DO MAKE USE OF OUR WEBSITE Our website is THE STODDEN CHURCHES. There you will find service information. It is somewhere you can suggest people look for information who are new to the area.

VIRTUAL COLLECTION PLATE: If you wish to be able to give electronically here are the Stodden Churches bank detail: Stodden account number 10842168 sort code 20-74-81

VIRTUAL CHURCH: If you want to “virtual worship” users can watch live streams of services from a range of churches and the Church of England will be improving AChurchNearYou.com in the days ahead to make this clearer. There is **Prayer for the day** - each day the Church of England publishes audio and text of the Prayer for the Day. There is the BBC daily service and Sunday worship also available on BBC Sounds.

PHONE CHURCH: *Daily Hope* offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line. The line is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044**

The Stodden Churches

Prayers and Readings for the week beginning Sunday 14th June 2020 – 1st Sunday after Trinity

Our Vision Statement: As the Stodden Churches we seek to move forward together in love and service, sharing the good news of Christ with our neighbours

From the Stodden Villages lease remember in your prayers : Teresa Allan, Pauline McManus, Steve Lemming, Trish Sizer, Frances Bratcher, Andy Langley, Andrew Seabrook, Rosemary Morgan, Anne Hauxwell. *If someone would like a visit or a prayer tell Stephen the Rector (709740)*

This week's Psalm: 8

**O Lord our governor,
how glorious is your name in all the world!**
2 Your majesty above the heavens is praised
out of the mouths of babes at the breast.
3 **You have founded a stronghold against your foes,
that you might still the enemy and the avenger.**
4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have ordained,
5 **What is man, that you should be mindful of him;
the son of man, that you should seek him out?**
6 You have made him little lower than the angels
and crown him with glory and honour.
7 **You have given him dominion over the works of your hands
and put all things under his feet,**
8 All sheep and oxen,
even the wild beasts of the field,
9 The birds of the air, the fish of the sea
and whatsoever moves in the paths of the sea.
10 **O Lord our governor,
how glorious is your name in all the world!**

The 1st Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:12-27: 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’, nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

The 2nd Reading: Luke 8:19-21: 19 Then Jesus’ mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. 20 And he was told, ‘Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.’ 21 But he said to them, ‘My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.’

A Reflection from the Rector: At the moment our Church buildings are empty this Sunday – you might see that as depressing. But I don’t, the picture of an empty church building prompts the question; “What is Church?” If there is one important lesson the last weeks of quarantine has taught us it is that Church is not the building. Just because we have not been using the buildings for worship and prayer does not mean the Church has stopped being the Church and doing the things that the Church should be doing. In particular the ZOOM services with their interaction and the means to see the faces of everyone joining for worship reminds us that the Church is people. Every

building could have crumbled to dust over the last weeks but the Church would still be; because the Church is people, not the building.

The Bible makes the point that the Church is people more than once; when Paul was writing to the church in the Greek city of Corinth he described the Church in terms of a human body. He wrote; *The body is a unit, though it is made of many parts, and though its parts are many, they form one body, so it is with Christ.* When Paul was writing to the Christian Church they had no permanent buildings, certainly nothing specifically set aside as a place for the Church to meet. In a way that was a really good thing, because the people, the Church, could not get side-tracked into thinking of the building where they met as being “holy” and it becoming an object of adoration and so taking away from the core Christian commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. So Paul was saying to the people who were the Church in Corinth; you are the Church and to understand yourselves as the church why not think of yourselves as a human body? An image they should all be familiar with as they all had one!

By using the idea of the Church as a human body Paul could make an important point of how the Church should be. He said, *Now the body is not made up of one part but of many:* so the Church is made up of people, all of whom bring something different to being the Church, and each one is needed for the Church to really be the Church that Jesus wants it to be. Paul goes on to talk about the need for all the different body parts to come together so the human body can function effectively; *the eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!”* Yes we could say that now he is beginning to push his comparison of the Church to the human body too far, because when was the last time one part of your body refused to cooperate with the rest! Well, if I think about it, my knees were not over keen on getting up today, and Sheila often accuses my ears of going missing!

The key point that Paul was making about the Church is that it is people, and every person that makes up the collection of people that is the Church in a particular place is needed because each one brings abilities and qualities that enables the Church to really BE the body of Christ, Jesus’ Church, in that place. Today we call this way of being Church as “every member ministry”. In Paul’s image of the Church as a human body, when that body is in action it is being Christ to the world. That is why he says to the people in Corinth, *You are the body of Christ.*

So if the answer to “what is Church” is people acting as the body of Christ what should the Church look like? We know what a Church building should look like. So the Church acting as the body of Christ should look like Jesus. By that I don’t mean sharing his physical appearance but rather sharing his essential quality and value, which is his love, the love that took him to the Cross. So the Church should be living to love like Jesus, and it should be living