



Anglican Parish of St John

NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 2026

MESSAGE FROM REV'D SAM

Life is never black and white, there are always ups and downs, celebration and grief. Many times even grief and celebration are intertwined. The mixed feelings you get when you immigrate to another country, or even decide to move towns. There is great excitement about the new place, the new opportunities, the new experiences it might offer. But there is also the grief of leaving those you love behind, of knowing no one, of loss of community and possibly identity.

I wonder if you can remember a time when life was messy and yet also beautiful at the same time?

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 presents us with 6 different parables about the kingdom of heaven. As we know the Gospel writer is within a context of Roman Oppression and the beginning of Christian persecution. So, what we see, specifically in the Gospel of Matthew is a shift from the usual language of Kingdom of God (which refers more to the cosmic kingdom, where God is over and above all things), to the language of the Kingdom of heaven (which refers more specifically to what this kingdom looks like in the physical, here and now). The 6 parables presented about this here and now, physical kingdom work to describe characteristics of the Kingdom, rather than give an explicit image. The writer uses simile and metaphor to describe the effect the kingdom might have on an individual or a community. So, they begin with the scope of the kingdom. It begins as the smallest of things, smaller even than a mustard seed, but it grows. It grows to be bigger, more widespread than any of the other kingdoms of the earth. So much so, that it can become an entity in which people can find their grounding, people can find life within the kingdom. In the same way, the picture of yeast within bread is used to show how the life inside the kingdom forces it to continue its growth. The story being told about the kingdom of heaven, then, is whether it grows up within an individual or whether we are looking at how it has grown from a simple carpenter's son, the Kingdom of heaven expands, yes, but more than this it holds life within it. Life, not in the dead or alive sense, nor really in the spiritual sense, but more that we can experience a fulfilling life as we participate within the Kingdom of Heaven. Then the simile shifts to the value of the kingdom depicting someone spending their life savings to buy a plot of land that has buried treasure and a merchant selling all he has in order to buy this one extremely valuable jewel. Although this strongly and explicitly directs our attention towards the high **value** that the kingdom of heaven has. It also does another thing, it continues to add to the physical here and now nature of the kingdom of heaven. In both parables, the buyer of the field and the buyer of the pearl actually take hold what they deem so valuable. They are able to enjoy the benefits of taking hold of what they have bought. The suggestion is, then that not only is the kingdom valuable, but we are able to enjoy the benefits of the kingdom of heaven in our daily lives! Possibly even suggesting that the more we give to participating in the Kingdom of Heaven the more it will benefit us.

Finally, we come to what might seem like a strange left turn in the parable telling. A fisherman throws their net into the sea and catches a bunch of different types of fish (indiscriminately) and then sorts them when they have been pulled into the boat. Again, like the parable from last week we have this imagery of light and darkness at war with one another, with this extremely violent picture of the righteous being saved, while the evil ones are thrown into the furnace of fire. For some this might further enhance a certain perspective on the end times, while for others it might sit as a dirty smudge on the page of what had been seeming like a beautiful picture of diversity within the Kingdom of Heaven. However, I want to suggest that we try reading this parable again, through the eyes of the first readers of Matthew's Gospel. That we notice the context of Roman oppression, that we hold the Greek ideologies of a dualistic body and soul, that we see a Jesus who begins a new kingdom right under the nose of the Emperor and shapes it with the beatitudes. The original listeners are being invited to recognize the contradicting strength of a community who follow this Jesus guy. Their lives are tough, most have low status and their communities are fragile. However, somehow as they learn how to follow Jesus they are enabled to become communities who offer hope, care and love. The oppression does not stop, they do not forget the physical and focus on life after death. Rather, they are

empowered to forge ways of being that recognize the pain, and yet are brought low by it. The Kingdom of heaven is in the hands of God, it is not their responsibility to decide who is in and who is out. Rather, they are called to become beacons of light that some recognise that this vulnerability will bring about pain. But it is only with this vulnerability can they truly offer love. In this way, rather than viewing individuals as either righteous or evil we are able to view our daily actions as either participating in the kingdom of heaven (righteousness) or the kingdom of Rome (evil).

What does this offer us though?

What it can offer us is a safe place full of other messy people where we can practice being vulnerable with each other, and so hope to become a community of love. In this space that we create when we are vulnerable enables others to feel worthy of knowing the true me, as well as offering a place for their own vulnerability. It is here that we become a community of love who recognises the pain, while becoming the hope of Christ.

WARDENS' REPORT

August already! We are almost through winter. With bulbs, magnolias and fruit trees all beginning to flower we do know that spring is on the way. The gardens around St John's are looking very pretty – thank you to the Gardening Team.

We have had positive feedback on shifting the 10.30 Service to Old St John's during the winter months. Although we don't have the service on screen, being in a warmer, more intimate church has been appreciated by all.

This month there are five Sundays, so 30 August will be a Combined Service at 9.30am. This will be a special Eucharist because we will take the opportunity to thank Archdeacon Julie and Andrew for their seven years of ministry in St John's Parish. Vestry would like to offer them a gift in appreciation for all they have done. If you would like to contribute to this, you may leave a donation at the parish office in an envelope clearly labelled **For Archdeacon Julie** or you can make a direct credit to the Parish of St John bank account: **010439 0015022 00 – For Archdeacon Julie**. Julie will preach and preside at this Eucharist. The service will be followed by Morning Tea/Brunch/Early Lunch, so please bring finger food to share.

Praise God for all His blessings to us – frosty mornings, sunny days and Rev. Sam's first three months of ministry which have flashed by.

Your Wardens, Coral Loomb and Christine Bryant.

STEWARDSHIP MONTH

This month we are focusing on the theme of Stewardship. Stewardship has always been an important part, not just of the Church, but of the overarching story of the Bible. For this reason, it should be something we take intentional time to reflect on throughout each year. Within the greater story of the Bible stewardship begins in the first chapter and finds its fulfilment in the final chapter. Adam and Eve are given the responsibility of stewarding the creation that God has placed them in; to care for the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and every living thing that moves upon the earth, as well as all the plants that give food. The reason they are called to care for these is that everything that is alive has the breath of God within it and so it has great worth to God. However, stewardship is not just about *caring for things*; *stewardship is a responsibility given to all people to "oversee" or "manage"*. In 1 Peter 4:10, the author encourages the reader that as good *oikonomos* (steward) of God's grace we need to serve one another with whatever gifts God has given us. By using our gifts to serve we show that we are good managers of what God has given us. Here we recognise that there is not only one way of stewarding, rather, that using the individual gifts we have been given by God, we are called to participate in bringing about the Kingdom of God. Stewardship, then, takes on a variety of applications; it can be viewed as offering my time and energy in whatever way that helps to manage the Church; it can be viewed as offering my skills or talents to empower the continual flourishing of the Church; it can also be viewed as offering my treasure or finance to enable the Church to function and serve all people.

As we look at stewardship this month, then, I encourage you to take some time to reflect on the ways that you have managed the gifts God has given; thank God for those gifts and for the ways you have been able to participate in the life of God. I also encourage you to ask God what he might be wanting you to offer in this next season of your life, with all three areas of time, talent and treasure.