



Sunday, 19th January 2020 – Epiphany 2
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Reading: 1 Corinthians 1: 1-9
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

360 Feedback

On Epiphany Sunday, I was greatly heartened because several of you, independently, gave me feedback on my sermon both verbally and by email. I always welcome feedback, whether you agree with me or not because it means that the sermon isn't just a one-sided point of view but rather, a three-way conversation between you, me and God, as he strengthens our faith by challenge and insight. It's that unity of hearts and minds working together that I hope to explore in my sermon.

The impact of handwritten letters

Before the service, I hope you caught a glimpse of the Christmas 'thank you' letter that I had received from my nephew; there's something so personal about a handwritten letter isn't there? They're treasured because the writer has expended effort in crafting it. Indeed, Oliver's letter is 25 years old and he now has a son of his own. We can read and re-read them valuing the intention of the message, as it brings the writer to mind.

Ancient letters that still resonate today

Imagine now, the reaction of the church in Corinth receiving Paul's letter. It would have been hand-delivered at no small risk to the courier dodging religious opponents, political upheaval or the pot-holed roads: not much has changed has it!

Like the Guernsey grapevine I don't doubt that the Corinthian Church grapevine was also pretty swift. "Have you heard we've received a letter from Paul. It's going to read at the church this morning and, of course, we'll discuss it after." Similar to you discussing my sermons. For the Corinthians, Paul's letter was new information, there was no previous edition, unlike our ability to read it in a variety of translations, as we can find on the Internet. I'm assuming though, that we don't often read this letter, after all it wasn't written to our Church and we didn't know Paul personally.

For all that, Paul wrote letters in the full knowledge that they would be handed around so that others could also gain guidance and encouragement and spur them into mission action. In a way, therefore, even with the passage of time, his message is for us too. So how do we receive it corporately, as well as personally, to allow it to challenge us afresh today and, hear God's voice and the action he might be urging us to take?

A fresh perspective on an old message

What if, in place of a sermon, I'd written a letter instead? Paul's message but in my own words? I wonder, would you consider that our church matched Paul's description of the Corinthians? And, would it impact you personally? Well let's find out. I'll not foist my letter on any one to read, I'll do so myself.

Dear All at St Andrew's,

I'm still truly amazed that God has called me to be a priest following his Son, as I serve you, together with Tim.

I'm writing to you not only as separate individuals but as importantly, a united church serving God in this parish. You're made holy through your faith in Jesus Christ, and called to be saints alongside every Christian in Guernsey. I pray that God's grace and peace are yours.

I often think of you, even if I can't see you. I thank God for you and that by his grace through Jesus Christ you have received a wealth of gifts from the Holy Spirit, for example your perceptive insights, your scriptural understanding and your mission outreach has grown. You do not lack any spiritual gift, as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to return. He also strengthens you so that you will not be found guilty when he comes. God is so faithful gathering you into companionship with his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

With my prayers and God's blessing, until I join you again.

Juliette