
Ephesians 4:1-14

Well, this is a bittersweet moment - my last sermon with you as your Moderator but in the sadness, there is the joy that my job has been completed successfully and next week Pieter and Hetty will be leading you on the next stage of your journey.

Again, I want to put on record my thanks for your willingness to have me in your midst. It has been a joy to renew fellowship with you, to help guide you in seeking the Lord for a new minister and to be doubly blessed to have two highly qualified saints willing to hear God's call on their lives to come here.

You have a great leadership team. There was a great Search Team and I just love the flexibility displayed as we began to see how things could work with Pieter and Hetty doing things differently from past ministers.

The last 25 months have been quite a journey. We have covered a range of issues, seen a number of candidates for ministry and adapted well to Covid-19.

So, I want to leave you with some advice for developing successfully in the coming months and years. Paul was writing to a young church in Ephesus and his exhortation in Chap 4 is clear - Live a life worthy of your calling.

We have each been called to be disciples, followers of Christ and there are, is it 3 or 5, characteristics:

Be completely humble and gentle.

There is no place to be boastful, puffed up or seeking to lord it over others.

Be patient, bearing with one another in love.

There are times when it can be easy to rub one another the wrong way. Particularly as lockdown continues, we can become anxious and tense which can lead to us being short-tempered. There may be times when we think our way is the right way. But, even if it is, we need to be kind and gentle.

Love covers a multitude of things. But being loving comes with a cost.

However, we are to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. Where there is unity, there is blessing. The atmosphere is sweeter, more open and welcoming. The Holy Spirit can work in such environments.

These are the basics of church relationships and together will enable you to flourish. But there is another responsibility that is needed for you to flourish. Simply put, you need to review your financial contributions to God's work here in Knaphill.

Yes, the reserves have been increasing - thanks largely to no minister stipend and rental income from the manse. But soon there will be a double whammy - a stipend and no rental income. To cover that, monthly giving needs to increase by around £1000 per month.

Let's break this down - in round terms that's £250 a week. With around 25 members, that's around £10 each. Some may be able to give more, others less. But, to me, that sounds eminently achievable.

Let's be humble and gentle, patient and bearing with one another in love as together we seek to be honourable toward Pieter and Hetty as they begin their ministry here.

But the passage continues. There is the reminder that we're called to one hope and grace has been given to each of us and, through Christ, gifts have been given.

Within the church we all have a role to play. No one is better than another for there is equality. We're all priests before God. We all have direct access into his presence. But as Paul points out, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to the church. Why? V12 to equip his people for works of service,

The roles of Pieter and Hetty are clear - so that the body of Christ may be built up. That is each one of you. And the purpose, the consequence is this: until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

We're looking for maturity. Now, most of Knaphill Baptist are mature in age, but we're looking for spiritual maturity. Sometimes that can be lacking. But as we become united, as we get to know Christ better, we will become more like him and find the fullness of Christ in our lives.

I sense so much hope and expectation within the church as this new chapter unfolds. It's beginning, not in the way many would like - being locked down and an induction service on Zoom. But God is above these minor inconveniences. Love, patience and unity will overcome.

My prayer is that you will know God's richest blessings in the coming days, months and years.

My love to you all.

Rev Mike Stanbrook