



# THIS IS YOUR SPACE TO GROW

## REFLECTION POINTS 10 MAY 2020

### ACTS 18:1-4

“ After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers. Every sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks.

### 1 COR 1: 10-18

“ Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, 'I belong to Paul', or 'I belong to Apollos', or 'I belong to Cephas', or 'I belong to Christ.' Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

### REFLECTION POINTS

I am sure we've all sat through hideously laborious and droning sermons that share nothing of the love and grace of God but speak volumes about the preacher's ability to speak without drawing breath for an hour straight.

I am sure we have also met at least one preacher who has the true gift of public preaching who shares the Good News in a way that we are impacted and affected. The delivery of the message does affect how we receive it, or not, but when do we confuse the message with the messenger?

There was a division within the church at Corinth – hey, church politics – and it appears to be about following particular preachers. However, I wonder if this is a symptom of the division rather than the cause.

We sometimes switch off from a preacher, not because of the message but because of something else that person has done or not done, said or not said. What does this say about community unity and how to achieve it?

We aren't going to agree on every part of being church, that doesn't matter, but we do need to speak with one voice and one mind, have one understanding about the basics of our faith. This time of lockdown has enabled many people to strip away the layers of extras they have acquired and don't actually want or need – that might be the busy-ness of life, the seemingly essential items that are no longer required, or the importance of relationships. It's the same for church.

But what do you regard as the basics?

The final blessing today was called  
**Soft Eyes Blessing by Anna**

*May the God who is community  
be with us as we seek to be a community*

*May God bless our dreams  
and may God shatter our dreams*

*May God help us to be real  
and to find depth in weakness and brokenness*

*May God help us to face and grow through  
conflict  
rather than pretend by being nice*

*May we look at each other through soft eyes  
and truly respect each other as human beings*

*May God help us let go of control  
and the need to fix one another*

*May God help us discover we are needy in our  
own souls  
and give attention to our own hearts*

*May God grant us the gift of an extraordinary  
love  
that flows from the heart of God  
that covers a multitude of wrongs.*

When I say 'I am a Christian' I'm not bragging of success, I'm admitting I have failed and need God to clean my mess.

When I say 'I am a Christian' I'm not claiming to be perfect, My flaws are far too visible, but God believes I'm worth it.

When I say 'I am a Christian' I still feel the sting of pain, I have my share of heartaches, so I call upon His name.

When I say 'I am a Christian' I'm not holier than thou, I'm just a simple sinner who received God's good grace, somehow!

What are your thoughts?

What does unity in community mean for you?

During the week, a member of a Uniting Church and lay preacher called Alexander Drysdale sent me his response to something I wrote recently and I share it with you with his permission:

When I say that 'I am a Christian', I am not shouting that I'm clean living, I'm whispering 'I was lost, but now I'm found and forgiven.'

When I say 'I am a Christian' I don't speak of this with pride, I'm confessing that I stumble and need Christ to be my guide.

When I say 'I am a Christian' I'm not trying to be strong, I'm professing that I'm weak and need His strength to carry on.

