

Heather Smith *reflects on*
Acts 11:1-18 and John 13:31-35

Building relationships with people who are very different from us isn't always easy. As humans we seem to be programmed to group ourselves into clans, suspicious of outsiders. The more dissimilar another group's values and behaviours from our own, the harder it becomes.

First-century Jews were different. They believed in only one God and had many strict laws, including diet. There was a reason for this: their distinctive identity was supposed to draw all the nations to the God of Israel. The standards were set high, so others would see them as a shining example and come to know the one, true God.

For Christians, today's reading from Acts shows how it actually came to pass. There is a great deal more to it than a story about eating pork. Peter's vision showed that the good news about Jesus was not just for the Jews. Thankfully, Peter got it. Then, when some non-Jews arrived at the house where he was staying, he understood that they could be welcomed into the new faith.

But being open to everyone was not the end of clans. Anyone can join the Christian clan, but Christians are still expected to have their own values, different from those of others. Jesus explained in John 13: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another... By this everyone will know that you are my disciples". If we demonstrate that love, people will be drawn to God. 🍷



Lord, teach me your values, and a willingness to share them joyfully with others, so I may welcome all into the faith. Amen.

People of the New Testament

The woman at the well (John 4:1-42)

by Caroline Fletcher

We're not even told her name. She is the woman Jesus met at a well in a place known as Sychar. He asked her for a drink and had a deep conversation with her. By studying what they discussed, we can discover a lot about the group of people to which she belonged, known as the Samaritans. These people appear a number of times in the New Testament including, of course, in the story of the Good Samaritan.

Today, Samaritans co-exist peacefully with their Jewish and Palestinian neighbours. Jesus' exchange with their ancient ancestor broke down barriers and challenged xenophobia. Inspired by such actions and moved by his Spirit, Jesus' followers went on to reunite Jew and Samaritan within God's family of the Church. Because of such events, St Paul could declare to Christians of many different ethnic backgrounds: "all of you are one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28). 🍷

LGBTQ+ Church

Part 2 – the challenge

by Jayne Ozanne

How do you create change in large religious institutions? This was the conundrum faced by myself and my friend who had introduced me to Pope Francis in November 2019 – the Argentinian ambassador to Italy and the Holy See, His Excellency Robert Manuel Carles.

The answer came from Pope Francis himself. He challenged the two of us to get as many senior religious leaders from around the world together to make a statement affirming

LGBTQ+ people which he could consider endorsing.

We therefore set about creating the Global Interfaith Commission on LGBTQ+ Lives that would bring together senior religious leaders from around the world who were prepared to speak out on behalf of LGBTQ+ people, specifically calling for an end of violence and criminalisation towards them. This project was supported by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the first to sign up was the late Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. 🍷

“If you wish to possess finally all that is yours, give yourself entirely to God.”

Hadewijch of Brabant, thirteenth-century Belgian mystic

Blandford Methodist Church: Sunday 18th May

Good morning and welcome to our Morning Worship with Holy Communion which is being led by Reverend Dr Mark Kimber. The stewards today are Tina Wild, Alan and Margaret Dymond and Jean Peck. Thank you to Tina for the flowers. After the service, please join us in the hall for refreshments.

Dates for your diary:

Sunday 25 th May	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Mr Barrie Knight
Sunday 1 st June	10.45 am	Mission in Britain: Morning Worship led by Reverend Carl Stokes
Sunday 8 th June	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Mrs Diana Middleditch
Sunday 15 th June	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Mr Colin Besant
Sunday 22 nd June	10.45 am	Local Arrangement service led by members of the congregation
Sunday 29 th June	10.45 am	Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by Reverend Dr Mark Kimber followed by General Church Meeting in the hall

Colehill Methodist: Every Monday, 11.00 am to 12.00 noon(ish), Bible Study, coffee, prayers and plenty of chat. All welcome.

Bible in a year: 18th – 24th May: 1 Chronicles 4 – 24 and John 6 - 8

Meet Reverend Dr Mark Kimber: Most Fridays Mark will be available in the Okeford Room from 10.00 am to 11.00 am for anyone who wishes to have a chat with him. However, on the third Friday of each month there will be a session entitled '**Meeting with Mark**' to which you are cordially invited.

Sunday 18th May: There will be a service to dedicate the Easter offering at 4.00 pm at Highcliffe Methodist Church.

Sunday 18th May: Woodlands Methodist Church's 146th Anniversary Celebration tea, 4.30 pm and Wellow Wood Worship Group will lead a service at 6.00 pm. Everyone welcome.

Lunch Club: Joyce has advised that the next Lunch Club will be at 12.30 pm on Friday 23rd May. Lunch Club will then take a break, with Lunch Club resuming at 12.30 pm on Friday 26th September.

Message from Joyce Wild, Lead Circuit Steward: Love Is ... Sammy Fain penned the lyrics, and Paul Francis wrote the music for the song “Love is a Many Splendored Thing”. And indeed, it is. That ‘eros love’ - a love between two people - that has spanned the centuries and has been expressed through literature, poetry, (who can forget the words of Solomon in the book “Song of Songs”) and of course in classical music and pop songs. As someone who has just celebrated their 51st Wedding Anniversary, I have learned over the years to appreciate that love grows and changes, deepens and widens as two very differing folk grasp what it means to share their lives. Lives that have exciting times, joyful times, alongside sad and difficult times. Then there is the love for family. A love that shows we care for others by the way we speak, act and respond to their needs. Having just spent six weeks at home in Bradford it has been a real privilege to have quality time with my brothers, their wives, nieces and nephews as together we have rallied around and helped my sister whilst my brother-in-law has been in hospital. I was also blessed to be able to take my mum out for some mother and daughter time, whilst also sadly being there at the end of her life which came suddenly and unexpectedly. Friends both secular and from church are also a vital part of what love is. They ground us in our thinking, support us in our times of need, have a laugh with us, wipe away our tears, and enrich our daily existence. But for me as a Christian the most important love is that of the God, who loves and knows me ‘warts and all’. The God who is “love divine, all loves excelling”, the reason for my being because of his unselfish act (John 3 v 16). And as I ponder the Easter story, so recently acted out, it causes me to think about my response to this amazing, all-powerful God. Do I give Him my unconditional love or are there strings attached? Do I show Him that I love Him by spending quality time in prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication? Am I happy in His presence and willing to listen to what He has to say to me by His Holy Spirit? Do I truly understand the words of Deuteronomy Chapter 33 v 27 and know that God’s love can conquer all? Jesus left his disciples with two commandments - to love our neighbour as ourselves and to love God. In our Circuit all the churches are filled with movers and shakers who proclaim the gospel message, show hospitality and provide a warm welcome to those seeking to know more about God. God’s love is evident for all to see. Let each of us take to heart the words of 1 Corinthians 13 v 4-8 and hold on in hope in this mixed-up world of ours knowing that: God’s Love is a Many Splendored Thing.

Joyce Wild, Lead Circuit Steward, May 2025

Blandford Foodbank is urgently in need of (updated 11.4.25) – Coffee, Squash, Cereal, Tinned Sweetcorn, Toothpaste. Any other donations of food or household goods are also welcomed. For those able to support the Foodbank with items, a box has been placed in the Narthex as a collection point.

John Cornish

Prayer: Please can we remember to uphold in prayer those members of our congregation we know are ill or suffering in some way.

If you know of anyone who would like prayer and be mentioned by name in The Link, please let me know (having obtained their permission first to mention them by name).

Minister: Reverend Dr Mark Kimber

Enquiries via Lead Steward, John Cornish, on 07799 516 735

Pastoral Support: Joyce Wild: Tel: 01258 454091