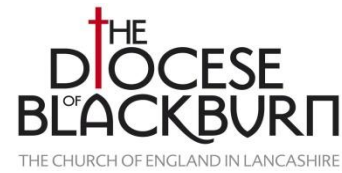


WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



Encouraging Christian house groups

I was recently reading Acts of the Apostles when two women came very much to the fore, Lydia (acts 15-16) and Priscilla (acts 18).

Later in Romans 16 Phoebe also makes her appearance ...

1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. 2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me. 3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. 4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. 5 Greet also the church that meets at their house.

It struck me just how much these three women contributed to the early church and how Lydia and Priscilla opened their homes to be used as churches and the spreading of the Gospel, especially Priscilla by the teaching given to Apollos, Acts 18: 24-27.

This reminded me of my own Christian experience some 30 years ago. I was what I refer to as a Sunday Christian, enjoyed worship and what I tried to understand of the sermons, and the fellowship over coffee. Monday to Saturday it was business as usual, sadly I was falling short as a Christian.

The church I was attending at the time had house groups and I was invited to join one. It was run by an amazing Christian couple who, with gentle teaching and example, brought me into a much deeper and relevant faith. Perhaps a little like what Lydia did for Apollos.

Time moved on, I arrived in Blackburn and now lead my own house group, one of five in our benefice. We meet weekly and we usually look in more detail at the previous Sunday's sermon. The preacher supplies notes and relevant questions for our guidance. This guidance puts emphasis on the application of the scriptures in our modern society. There is time to ask those questions, amongst friends, that the business and time constraints of a Sunday service make it difficult to ask.

However, there is so much more, we pray together, often share meals together, support each other where necessary and believe it or not have lots of fun. If you don't have home groups, pray, let the spirit guide you as it did Lydia and Priscilla, give it a go, they are such a great asset for any parish, cost nothing and are great at for making disciples, being witnesses and growing leaders.

Geoff Hutchinson, LLM emeritus, Blackburn the Redeemer

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES