



Serving Communities

In chapter 5, verses 13 to 15 of his Epistle to the Galatians, Paul wrote:

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

One of the areas identified as a key focus item in our Diocesan Vision and Strategy is serving communities. In it we ask ourselves “What is God calling us to do in this place” and we suggest three approaches; understanding the need; partnering for mission; and building the Kingdom of God in our neighbourhoods.

Some people have the misconception that being called by God is something only missionaries, pastors, nuns, and other church leader’s experience. But we are all called to serve God by serving others. Service to others is a great way to put aside our self-centredness and notice how we are connected, even indebted, to others. When we start seeing the genuine needs of others, it deters our own sense of entitlement. None of us became the people we are on our own, but by the sacrifice and investment of many others. And this does not take into account what Christ has done for us. In Philippians 2, Paul reminds us again that we should *“Do nothing*

from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Serving others not only reveals the bonds between us; it reflects the love of God. When we notice service to us, and when we serve others, we experience God's grace. Jesus modeled grace that goes beyond our understanding while all the time teaching and leading people to a common vision of humanity based on mercy and kindness. So, we need to ask ourselves some questions: Are we looking out for others the way we look out for ourselves? Can we put their needs ahead of our own? How are you serving your community?

Bishop Michael has spoken often about the need for us to think about our relationships with those around us. The challenges facing us and our communities can't be solved by us alone. It will only be done by joining together with others. We know in our hearts that our future lies in living the gospel and spreading the love of God in demonstrable ways that will improve the lives of those less fortunate than we are.

If you would like to speak with someone about how to begin, or how to renew some of your earlier efforts in serving your community, please contact either Doug Cowley at scdcoug@gmail.com or Wayne Varley at wvarley@ontario.anglican.ca