

## **Carol's reflection – June 13**

Have you ever considered the importance of the word AND?

Luke Powery at that Preaching Conference that Jeff and I attended invited all of us to think about that 'God functions with conjunctions'.

He said, 'Our God is an AND God'. God is Creator AND Redeemer AND Sustainer. 'In the beginning God created the heavens AND the earth...

The examples are almost endless.

Today, I wonder if we can consider our call, our place, to be both good soil AND good seed for God's kingdom – God's kindom

We are reading in Mark's Gospel, images, parables, of the kingdom of God. Seed scattered on the ground that grows and grows and then is harvested. A mustard seed planted, the smallest of the seeds that becomes a plant so large that birds can nest in its shade.

To be good soil is to let the seed of God's word, God's love grow in our lives in a way that changes us, transforms us. We are called to live justice and kindness and to walk humbly with our God. And when we do that, our lives themselves become good seed to the good soil of others!

Justice AND kindness AND walk humbly with God. Those are the words of the prophet Micah.

Love the Lord your God AND your neighbour as yourself. Those are the words of Jesus.

Faith, hope AND love abide, these three, and the greatest of these is love – make love your aim. Those are the words of the Apostle Paul.

So how do we live that?

How do we live justice, kindness, humility, faith, hope, and love?

Brian McLaren, an American writer and theologian, talks about the need for us to be a good pastor to ourselves.

To be a good pastor to ourselves is to be able to say to ourselves that we are beloved children of God.

We are loved by God. We are loved with all our strengths AND our weaknesses. We are loved with our faith AND our doubt. We are loved with all the good AND the bad.

And, when we can know that, then not only are we a good pastor to ourselves, but we can be a good pastor to others in all the diversity that life offers.  
God loves diversity.

Think about the image of seeds and the garden. We plant the same seeds but we do not get identical plants (yes – the science of cloning might raise a different point here, but I don't want to get off track).

God loves diversity and differences.

Flowers are not identical even when they grow from the same seed. Beans, and corn, and squash, all different. Onions and apples, all different. Tomatoes, carrots, etc., etc., etc. God loves diversity.

And when we think about people – well, clearly God loves diversity too!

Even when we consider identical twins, or those people who are our 'doppelgängers', we are diverse.

And, diversity is not just in appearance, diversity is in every bit of our humanity. What we think, how we feel, we are diverse.

And, part of being good seed and good soil, is to recognize that this created diversity, is beloved of God. We are created to be diverse, to be different from one another. And, in the words of Luke Powery, "Diversity does not have to be divisive."

California Bishop Yvette Flunder talked about the conversion of Saul in the Book of Acts. Saul is a great persecutor of Christians. When Saul is travelling to Damascus a light shining from heaven surrounds him and he hears a voice saying 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me. I am Jesus...' and he is unable to see. The Disciple Ananias is sent to him to lay hands on him so that Saul may regain his sight. Ananias does not want to do this because Saul has persecuted so many Christians. But, of course, Ananias does what God asks, Saul is converted and becomes Paul. Paul becomes foundational to the spreading of the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus Christ. Bishop Flunder says – There has to be an interface between Ananias and Saul before there can be a Paul.

There has to be an interface with diversity to grow God's kingdom.

And perhaps a part of that interface with diversity is to recognize the importance of AND.

God loves you AND me.

God calls me AND you.

With all our strengths, with all our weaknesses, with all our faith, with all our doubt in

order to live justice and love mercy and walk humbly with God. In order to let faith, hope and love abide these three, and the greatest of these is love.

We must know our place as seed, spreading the Word and as Soil, letting the Word grow in us.

We are seed, AND we are soil.

This is the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.