

Yesterday Ailsa and Don, who are part of our Sunday morning community, were married with Bishop Philip's permission in the grounds at St Stephen's. The 8 people with them, all socially spaced, regularly sanitised and contact traced, rejoiced. We couldn't help recognising Love standing in front of us as they made their vows. We prayed, that as they are blessed they will continue to be a blessing to others.

There's continuity between what makes us who we are and what we do.

Jesus often speaks of a similar continuity.

As the Father loves me, so I love you, love one another.

Although exasperating to Jesus, it's encouraging to us that the disciples who were with him still have questions.

Jesus joins the dots.

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Jesus reveals the character of God; Jesus is God in action. Jesus invites those gathered to continue God's work in the world.

When he says they will do what he has done, asking things 'in his name' he is placing his confidence in them. Jesus knows that with his Spirit and in community with others, they will become attuned to his priorities; pray and act in line with them.

Within 6 weeks of Jesus death these same followers were able to join the dots themselves. They experienced the surge of God's life within them and witnessed people transformed by forgiveness, freedom and life.

Knowing God isn't like a scientific formula. Each one of us will have a different way of speaking about how we came to recognise God for ourselves.

For some it will be a narrative of life from childhood, where God's presence has been foundational.

For others there will have been a gradual awakening;

For others there will be a moment to look back on when we knew we were loved for the first time.

Knowing we are loved by God is the beginning of healing, renewal, transformation. Think of Adam on the video clip. Exploring this with others is how we are nurtured into new life.

As we move out into community again, we aren't sure what it's going to be like. We are looking forward to standing again on our ground, to giving and receiving the warmth of eye contact, a smile, even though touch is still beyond us.

How we are going to gather, what we are going to do, are still matters for prayer and wise counsel.

Please pray for those who will make those decisions.

Today through the music in our service we are reminded that encountering God connects us into a nationwide and worldwide community.

If we have been doing well in these days, we are aware that others are in different situations. Praying in line with the will of God will open our eyes to recognise and respond to need around us, whether physical, emotional or spiritual.

Even as we, in Aotearoa, begin to relax within limits, we are mindful and committed to people across the world whose circumstances are different from ours.

Praying according to the will of God compels us to abandon self-congratulation and commit to keeping our vision wide.

Let us rejoice that Jesus reveals God's love to us,

Let us be thankful for the ways we have known God's love over these weeks.

Let us recognise that Jesus reveals God who suffers with us and for us and receive what we need.

Let us become a transformed community ready to transform God's world.