Welcome to the new and final Holy Habit: The Holy Habit of Serving. I can hardly believe that we are nearing the end of our two year Holy Habit journey together. Hasn’t it gone quickly! I’ve got lots of thoughts buzzing around in my head about Holy Habits and serving, and I’d like to share some of them with you.

A definition of “holy”.

My computer dictionary defines “holy” as “dedicated or consecrated to God.”

What is a habit?

A habit is a learned behaviour that is repeated until it becomes automatic ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com) June 2020). Because the behaviour is learned, that means we are not born with it. In this habit’s context, we are not born knowing how to serve.

So, what is a holy habit?

If we put these two definitions of “holy” and “habit” together, I suggest that we could perhaps say that a holy habit is a learned, repeated and automatic behaviour that we dedicate to God. I would also add that the Holy Spirit guides us into developing these habits.

What does serving mean?

My computer dictionary states that to serve means to perform duties or services for another person or organization. Some people work in paid occupations which serve others, eg those in the armed forces, in the NHS, in shops and restaurants, in schools, in the emergency services, in the food industry, in transport and in government to name but a few. In this context, employees are being paid to meet other people’s needs. Others work in volunteer roles.

What does Jesus say about serving?

In Matthew 25 v 31-46 Jesus takes meeting other people’s needs so seriously, that he states we will be judged according to whether we have met the needs of others. He talks of great blessings for those who meet other’s needs:

*“… Come, you who are blessed by my Father:*

*Take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.*

*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,*

*I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,*

*I was a stranger and you invited me in,*

*I needed clothes and you clothed me,*

*I was sick and you looked after me,*

*I was in prison and you came to visit me…*

*I tell you the truth,*

*Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me...”*

The Holy Habits (HH) booklet *“Serving”* reminds us of Jesus’s words in Mark 10 v 42-45, where Jesus states that the focus of his ministry is on serving others rather than receiving status (p25). This HH booklet states that “serving is a Christ-like way of living” (p6), and challenges those who take Jesus as their model to make serving their aim (p25). This Christ-like motivation is what makes Christian service different to secular volunteering.

How do we serve at Bents Green?

For some of us, we serve others through our paid occupation, either now or in the past. For some of us, we serve others through volunteering, or by raising awareness of injustice or inequalities, locally, nationally and internationally. For some of us, we serve others in church roles, including prayer ministry which can be seen and unseen, people who work in Junior Church, or people on committees such as resources, or leadership.

It can seem daunting when we look at the list of serving that Jesus spoke about in the above passage. We must be careful not to take on the burden of guilt if we feel we are not serving in all the areas that Jesus mentioned. There are brothers and sisters at Bents Green who have a passion for making known issues of injustice and inequalities, both at local, national and international levels. Many at Bents Green passionately serve others by giving and distributing food and clothing to the food banks and homeless charities; by working as Chaplains to the emergency services and local schools; working with people who have addiction problems; through evangelistic music and prayer ministry in prisons; by working in the NHS, judiciary and schools; by working in dementia cafes; by providing flowers, coffee, food for Church services, and giving a warm welcome to newcomers at Church; through an amazing prayer ministry; through preparing services and preaching; playing or singing in the worship group; by working on the sound desk; or by being digitally literate and able to create amazing PowerPoint services!

Interestingly, Paul puts serving as the second spiritual gift, and encouragement as the fourth (Romans 12 v 6-8). I think we have spade loads of both these gifts at Bents Green, so let’s continue serving and encouraging others as we are led by the Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!