

We exist to serve! What a great mission statement for a local church. I recently saw that phrase. Not on a church website. But at Bluebottles, our local café/restaurant. Their stated reason for what they do. Service. We exist to serve! loudly proclaims their business card. Bluebottles nails it. Has Northern Beaches Anglicans? One of the Values in our Parish Ministry Framework reads, *'serving others to model Jesus and point others to him'* An expressed value. A biblical value. Is it a lived value? Is existing to serve part of our DNA? In the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, the foundational prayer book of the Anglican Church, there is a Catechism. An instruction for people to learn before they pledge personal public commitment to Christ. One section reads, *'My duty toward God, is to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength; to worship him, to give him thanks, to put my whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy Name and his Word, to serve him truly all the days of my life.'* Sisters and brothers, as the body of Christ, we exist to bring glory to God. God is glorified as we serve him with the servant heart of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Together as fellow workers. Agents of God. In his grand purpose of moving the whole of creation toward Jesus. As the word of God says of Jesus, *'all things have been created through him and for him.'*

**Colossians 1:16b** As a Christian you are a diakonos. A servant, a minister. Not a lone ranger. But a member of the diverse, multi-gifted, one body of Christ. Did you take on board the first reading? You are a valued member whether you are a foot, hand, eye, ear or epiglottis. That leaf-shaped flap of cartilage located behind the tongue, at the top of the voice box. A valued member of the body of Christ whether you seem weak or less honourable. As Paul says in today's reading from **1 Corinthians 12**, *'On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty,'* **v22-23** After all the ugly epiglottis seals off the windpipe during eating, so food not accidentally inhaled. Brothers and sisters, do you recognise your value in the body of Christ? If you struggle with your value, are you listening to God's voice? Or, are other voices getting your attention, diminishing you, robbing you of the joy of your status as a saint? Born again by the Holy Spirit. The word of God says, *'For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.'* **v13** Privilege brings

responsibility. Membership of the body carries with it a life of service in the name of Christ. Summarised in **Ephesians 4:1-6**, as walking in a manner worthy of your calling. Exhibiting the character of Christ. Striving for the health of the one body of which you are a member. Paul moves from exhorting to teaching his readers, and us. *'But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.'* **v7**

Did you hear that brothers and sisters? Each Christian gifted by God in order to fulfil the responsibility of serving God to his glory. So significant is serving God for his glory. God gives gifts to the church for the purpose of equipping the saints to serve. Our key verses this morning. *'So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.'* **v11-13** These verses, the biblical injunction for our church to be shaped by biblical priorities and values. Four principles from these verses. To understand, grasp and apply. **One**, the gifts spoken of. That Christ gives the church are people. Paul doesn't list particular gifts but particular offices, roles. Christ's gift to the church: gifted ministers of God's word. Sisters and brothers, praise God for his provision of gifted ministers at Northern Beaches Anglicans. Keep honouring, valuing them. As you currently do in abundance. Pray God will graciously continue to gift this church such ministers until Jesus returns. **Two**, the role of gifted ministers of God's word. Teach the Bible. So the body of Christ grows in unity in the faith, knowledge of Jesus, maturity. Not the only role. A priority. A priority that needs protecting. For it is by means of the word of God that God achieves his purposes in individual lives and in his world. Bible teaching includes but not limited to the Sunday sermon. Paul expresses that in summarising his ministry to the Christians in Ephesus. *'You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 'I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.'* **Acts 20:20-21,27**

Brothers and sisters, how are you enabling your pastor/teachers in the primary responsibility of teaching the Bible in this church? **Three**, enabling believers to exercise their respective ministries in building up the body, a key motivation in rightly teaching the Bible. The link between the Bible and equipping the saints captured in Paul's words to his ministry apprentice, Timothy. *'All Scripture is God-breathed and*

*is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'* **2 Timothy 3:16-17** Sisters and brothers, a church can run all sorts of training programmes, set up all types of helpful ministry structures, have hundreds of willing servants of Christ, but if the faithful teaching of the Bible is neglected these things are an empty shell. Biblically faithful sermons, biblical truths spoken personally into the lives of other saints, the absolutely necessary fuel for ministry. **Four**, Christ intends to fill the universe with his rule. His instrument in this purpose, the church. The gathering of God's people around Christ through his word. Even with all its failings and flaws. The church the means by which God moving the whole of creation toward Jesus. Moving people to the right. Brothers and sisters, you belong to the greatest enterprise in the world, the church. Each of you play a vital role in the unstoppable movement of God. By his grace he has saved you, added you to his body, gifted you by his Spirit. For a fulfilling, fruitful purpose. How are you getting ready to serve as God opens doors? How open are you to the life-giving word of God continuing to do its transforming work in your life, equipping you for service? I enjoy the experience of being served at Bluebottles by people committed to high levels of service. I am overjoyed there are churches where fellow saints are being equipped for ministry to the glory of God. Churches like Northern Beaches Anglicans. As Jesus says, *'let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'* **Matthew 5:16**