

**May I speak in the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

What do we get up to in Church?

In a former parish, we were involved in discussions with a local developer about affordable housing and a new community space. We were trying to ensure that there was genuinely affordable housing in the area. The developer was trying to encourage us to focus on the community space and not to concern ourselves with the kind of housing being built.

I can still remember the flash of anger race across my churchwarden's face when the developer suggested we needn't worry about the price of housing being built, there'd be enough room in the community space for us to play all the Bingo we wanted. We left the meeting soon after. As soon as we were outside, my churchwarden exclaimed... I'll keep this clean... `*something* Bingo?! Is that what they think we do?!' I didn't let on that I tend to find Bingo a bit cut-throat for my liking.

What do we get up to in Church?

There's a disconnect between what we do and are as Church and what people think we do and are as Church. As Christians, we can also fall foul of this disconnect. We can lose sight of what it means to be Church, to be the body of Christ, as we do all the things that are needed in the life of a Christian community or any institution - keeping the building open, clean, in good condition, and so on, and so on. We can lose sight of what it means to be the body of Christ in all the tasks and activities we have to do.

What does it mean to be the body of Christ? What does it mean to be Church in De Beauvoir Town?

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

This text from Isaiah in our Gospel reading is sometimes called the 'Nazareth Manifesto' - a kind of mission statement of what Jesus brings. Good news to the poor. Release to captives, insight to those who struggle to see or perceive, freedom from oppression, the reassurance of God's love and favour.

What do we get up to in Church? What does it mean to be the body of Christ? Good news to the poor. Release to captives, insight to those who struggle to see or perceive, freedom from oppression, the reassurance of God's love and favour.

Would those outside the Church recognise this as our mission statement? How might we show this vision of the Body of Christ more clearly to the world outside?

This is not just a matter of communications - though this is part of our life together, and our excellent team of volunteers do so much to share more widely something of our what it means to be Church. We are the best means of communicating what it means to be Church, because we are the Church, the body of Christ.

We are the people called to be good news, to release captives, to share insight, to free from oppression, to be concrete signs of God's love. All of us are called to find our place in Christ's body. To find how it is God is calling us to reveal to the world what it means to be Church. Not all of us are called to show the world what it means to be Church in the same way. Not all of us are called to be apostles or prophets or teachers.

But all of us are called to be those agents of connection between the world outside and our life together in this place, agents of communication of what it means to gather together as a church family, agents of proclamation of the good news Christ brings to all people: Good news to the poor, release to captives, insight to those who struggle to see or perceive, freedom to the oppressed. All of us are called to make God's love for each and every person abundantly clear so that no one can doubt what we get up to in this place: we get caught up in the very love which God has for each and every one of us, for me and for *you*.