

‘After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages’

This description from the Book of Revelation gives us a vision of what the Church should be. A community of people drawn from every nation, every tribe, every people, every language. Every street, every workplace, every community. The Church is that group of people called by God to follow Christ from each and every part of our community where Christ might lead them.

Today, we celebrate the baptism of Aylmer & Eliza. Every baptism is a celebration of God’s adding to those called to be members of the Church from every tribe, and tongue and people and nation. Today, we celebrate the gift of new life and pray for them as God calls them to whatever life has in store.

In our first reading, through Peter calls Tabitha to new life. When we are baptised, we are likewise called to new life through the community who prepares us for baptism. We celebrate that in the waters of the font God give us the gift of new life, and calls us to that for which he has created us. None of us know quite what these callings might be. Today, Aylmer and Eliza begin their exciting calling, and we pray for them, and for all that God has in store.

Today we also celebrate that God does not just call us as individuals. We are called into a family. This is not just our own family, but the family of the church - our church family here are St Peter's and the wider family of all Christians

throughout the world. We are supported by the prayers and encouragement of others, and especially through the prayers and encouragement of God's saints who have gone before us, and pray for us in heaven even now.

Today we celebrate that Aylmer & Eliza's family have brought them to baptism, and we mark their membership of the family of the Church, symbolised especially by their new godparents, and the promise of gifts and presents each and every birthday and anniversary of today's baptism will bring! (I hope god parents you read the small print when agreeing!).

The gifts and presents godparents will bring are reminders of the gift at the heart of today's celebration, the gift of life in our creation, and the gift of new life in Christ's Resurrection. We celebrate this gift in this season of Easter in which Baptism enables us to share.

We know that life does not always feel like the gift which we celebrate today. There will be good times as well as difficult times for Aylmer & Eliza, just as there are for all of us. This is where we play our part as family, friends and siblings in Christ through love, and prayer, and supporting Aylmer & Eliza as they continue to learn and grow.

And when things might seem especially tough, we are reminded that even at those times, we are being called by the one whose voice we recognise as he calls us, the one in whose hands we are always held, the one who through baptism calls Aylmer, Eliza, and all of us to receive the gift of eternal life.

The one who in our Gospel reading calls out to us: 'My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish'. The one who is calling Aylmer and Eliza to baptism this morning. The one who in a few moments will meet us in the bread of the Eucharist. The one who calls us all to himself and to the gift of new life!