



We gather because we are God's family.

Date: Sunday 21st November

Speaker: Andrew & Rosie McNeil

Key Verses: Matt 12:50 and John 19:26-27

Talk Summary:

- Whatever your experience of family has been, Jesus redefines family for every single one of us. Matthew 12:50 and John 19:26-27 We are God's family. We are different and we are equal.
- This last Sunday before Advent was traditionally called "stir up Sunday". For the Sunday before advent (late November) the opening prayer in Anglican parishes everywhere reads:
 - *Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people, that they bringing forth the fruit of good works, may be richly rewarded: through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen*
- The tradition that emerged was to stir up both our will to serve God and stir up something to eat! It's where the tradition of preparing a Christmas pudding together came from. We're reviving the tradition of stir up Sunday as our seasonal parable!
- Traditionally 13 ingredients went into a Christmas pudding representing Jesus and his disciples. You couldn't have found a more unlikely combination of people than Jesus's first followers. You had freedom fighters and traitors. Manual workers, business owners and one from nobility- Nathaniel. They were different but equal, rather like the Church.
- Your basis for belonging in God's family is not your performance, not your social status, your salary or your educational achievements. It's by God's grace that you've been welcomed into God's family. We all are equally loved by God.
- It's really good to get to know people not like you. When we listen to other people's story of sacrifice and loss, of racism and injustice, of answered prayers and breakthrough, of trust and hope, we're changed. Our respect deepens, our love grows. Our image of God is more vivid, our view of His Church expands.
- We are God's family. We are different and we are equal. Together we display God's love. 1 John 4:20.
- God stirs us up to bring forth the fruit of Good works. In the Bible we're told that God has prepared good works for each of us to do. We know that love is the first fruit of the spirit. John 13:35. Sundays and small groups are such a key part in that becoming a reality.

- Jesus said *“Give, and it will be given to you.... with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”* Luke 6:33 Let’s ask what can I do for others rather than what are others doing for me?
- Holly normally goes on top of a pudding. It represents the crown of thorns. We remember the example of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve others. This passage in Hebrews sums things up so well.
- *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.* Hebrews 10:24 ESV

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship. (Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? (*Go around the group quickly don’t spend a long time on it*)

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- We are different and equal. What do you appreciate most about being in a diverse Church family? What have you learned from someone in a different life-stage or from a different culture than yours?
- What are some examples of love in action you’ve seen? Think both big and small.
- What are the big and small things God might be stirring in your heart right now?
- What one thing might you do over advent to get to know someone not like you? (talking with people are different, having a drink together, having a meal together?)
- From what you saw or heard at Big Church, how do you think God is stirring you?
 - Recall the examples on screen (Starting a group, serving in compassion ministry, the culture of welcome.)
 - If you are unsure maybe have someone pray for you that this advent would be a time of God stirring you up as you follow him.
- Pray for 1-2 people you know (who don’t yet follow) for the Lord to be at work in their lives this advent season.

Witness - How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don’t know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to? *bvc.so/whats-on*
 - Christingle All Age services // 28th Nov
 - Week of Prayer // Starts 29th Nov
 - Christmas Hamper Drive // 29th Nov-5th Dec
 - Encounter Night // 4th Dec
 - Carol Services // 12th Dec