

REFLECTIONS ON: A VISION STATEMENT FOR ST. PHILIP ANGLICAN CHURCH

6. As Jesus welcomed all people into fellowship, loving them into new life, we want to be a community in which all people experience unconditional welcome. We want to provide continuing spiritual nourishment, support, love, and care equally to all people because we believe that transformation comes as people experience the gracious love of God at work in their lives through the welcome and love of God's church.

Jesus was constantly challenged by those who were horrified at the kind of people with whom he associated. Jesus was criticized for extending table fellowship to those deemed unacceptable. They said, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2)

Paul understood that Jesus broke down distinctions between people. Paul taught that "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ." (Galatians 3:28) Jesus came to create one new humanity.

Church exists to create space for people just to be. You don't have to be a certain way to belong in the church. There is room for everyone.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them." (Matthew 10:13) Sometimes children may be a little bit energetic or noisy, but we make room for them. We do not shut them out. Children particularly remind us open and soften toward all people. Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5) When we welcome each other, we welcome Jesus.

What might make it difficult for me to welcome others?

How can I grow in my ability to welcome all as I would want to welcome Jesus?