



*The next three Sunday Sermons will serve to remind church members and to inform newcomers of our Church Vision: here at St Paul's we aim to become a "Growing Community of Grace". We will find that building such a community requires us firstly to CONNECT. Read 1 Peter 1: 4 – 6.*

### CONNECTION IS EVERYTHING .....

- If you are a Lego brick. (We all chose a Lego brick to 'represent' us on the way into the service!) They come in myriad shapes, sizes and colours all designed with one thing in common: their 'clutch power'
- Connection is everything for a Church: connection with God and with each other. Without connection our church becomes dead and pointless, with it everything becomes possible.
- The apostle Peter is writing to the churches in Turkey about 30 years after the resurrection. The church was spreading across and beyond the Roman Empire and all kinds of people who normally would have nothing in common were forming 'growing communities of grace'.
- **Verses 4-5:** Peter reminds them that they were designed to connect powerfully and eternally with God and with each other. He encourages them that God is building His church, not out of stones like the Jewish temple, but with the community of His people. We are all being built into a spiritual house

### OUR CONNECTION WITH JESUS IS EVERYTHING

- We are designed to connect with Jesus, it's what we are made for and is the most important connection we'll ever know. We come to Jesus, called the living Stone in **verse 4**, because in spite of being rejected and put to death on a cross, He rose again, defeated death, and lives for ever.
- Jesus is connecting with people everywhere and all the time, including here at St Paul's. This year we have had the privilege of seeing people come to Jesus through Alpha Courses, cell groups, Sunday worship, children's work, mid-week outreach and many other ways. God is just a simple prayer away
- **Verse 6** describes Jesus as the precious and tested cornerstone. In the temple this was the huge square-cut stone which determined all the levels and angles for the rest of the building. Jesus is the foundation of the whole church: connected to Him, our lives are for ever aligned to His, straight and true. **6b:** those who trust in Jesus and lock themselves to Him, will never be put to shame.

### OUR CONNECTION WITH EACH OTHER IS EVERYTHING

- **Verse 4**, once we **connect** with Jesus, we find that we are **being built** into a spiritual household. As we connect with what God is doing at St Paul's, He then connects us with each other, building us together into a community of grace. Note that it is **HIS** work to build the church – not ours.
- Growing a community of grace is impossible by human effort. Peter was given his name by Jesus: previously Simon, he was named 'the Rock' but he knows that Jesus builds His church by bringing people together in spite of our tendency to steer away from deep relationships.
- Real connection demands vulnerability before God and before other people, and that's scary. But we are learning to love each other and journey with each other through life's joys and sorrows. We are finding we can be known for who we really are and don't have to pretend: we are learning to connect
- In the Lego movie, the baddie turns out to be the child's Dad – he glues his Lego creations together! But Lego bricks are meant to connect with each other in an infinite variety of ways .... Are you stuck?

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### Questions for discussion

- 1 *What did it mean for you to connect with Jesus? In what ways are you connecting with folk at St Paul's?*
- 2 *If you are new to St Paul's, are you finding friends, accessing the things arranged for newcomers and beginning to feel God at work, building you into His house at St Paul's?*
- 3 *If you have been here a while: how could you grow in connection with God and with people this term?*
- 4 *If you have been a St Paul's member for some time, what are deeper, more vulnerable connections going to look like for you – in prayer, in worship, in your relationships with others.*
- 5 *An easy start for most people would be to resolve to join in with Sunday Coffee time from 10 am to 10.25, deliberately talking to people we don't know very well and [please, says RB] being ready for Worship at 10.30*