

Sunday 3rd May 2026 - 5th of Easter

As some of you may know I like playing with Lego.

I find it relaxing but at the same time stimulates the creative process, because I never know what the finished article will look like when I eventually stop building.

During the process I will pick up bricks and then put them to one side because they are not quite what I'm looking for only to find later that they are just what I need to fill a gap.



I have never done any dry stone walling but I guess there is a similar process finding the right stone for the right place, something that comes with experience. Having an eye for the shapes.

When Peter in his letter speaks of a building process it is thought he is referring to well known words from the book of Samuel in our old testament, which speaks of King David's son building the temple in Zion / Jerusalem as a house for God to live. Built on a rock. A cornerstone.

The foundation needed to be the right stone, and the early Christians came to consider Jesus to be this stone that the new Temple would be built on.

Do you remember the time when Jesus said he would destroy the temple and build it up again in 3 days?

This new temple fit for God to live in would not be made of giant blocks of solid immovable stone but of people and the foundation would be Jesus himself the son of God.

This connection may well have been a play on words, as is often the case in Hebrew, as the word for son is **Ben** and the word for stone is **Eben**.

Peter uses this imagery to paint a picture, he says that the stone that the builders rejected the one thrown aside as not being the right shape to be used was Jesus, who had been rejected by the Jewish authorities as not being what they expected a Messiah to be like. This Jesus became the perfect stone to found the living temple which is truly the home of God.

And perhaps as Peter thinks back to a time when Jesus named him as a rock. The name Peter means rock.

It says In Matthew's Gospel Ch 16 v18 Jesus says that Peter is the rock on which Jesus would build his church.

Peter expands on this image with all believers being rocks when he writes "Like living stones yourselves, you are being built up into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood"

You may recall, if you were here last week, how in the Children's JAM session we had considered how our churches now are not the physical building, but are made up of us people. Each with our own skills and talents to offer back to God.

We are those living stones.

It has been a while, going back to the early 1980's I was training to be a lay reader and had to preach for the first time, and it was on this passage from Peter. It was not long after the church had been built and opened in 1979 so for years our focus had been on bricks and mortar and Father Trevor Green was trying to change our focus back to a more spiritual understanding of what church is. Also he was about to move on and we faced a time without a priest in charge. I don't have a record of what I said but I am pretty sure it was along these lines that each of us is a part of, and important to, God's church in this place. Each of us, with our different shapes, fit together to make a powerful and strong church, perfect to work with God in the mission to share the Gospel.

I always feel blessed that our Patron Saint is Stephen, someone who was a member of his church who was recognized as being an ideal person to carry out basic tasks in the church, of caring for the needy. He was made a deacon to show he was trusted to do these things but he then went on to be so much more, an evangelist challenging the establishment and speaking truth to power.

The passage we heard from the Acts of the Apostles recount his final moments of life linking to the influential impression he made on the young man who held the coats of those who killed him. A young man who changed his name to Paul and went on to proclaim the gospel through much of Asia and South Eastern Europe.

Stephen in his final moments, filled with the Holy Spirit had a vision of Heaven as the barriers between earth and heaven dissolved.

In our third reading from John's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples about how there is a place in the Kingdom of God, the house of God for all of us. It is thought that the words he used are like those used by a bridegroom to his bride, saying there is room for her to move in with his family, the custom at the time. Jesus says he is going to get the room ready for and will lead the way.

In fact he says to his disciples "I am the way" he will show us how we can get there by treading in the footsteps of Jesus, striving to be "Christ Like" in how we live.

We as living stones that make up God's dwelling on earth will also have a place in God's heavenly home in the time to come. **Amen**

