The Reverend Dr Garnet Roper was the preacher for this Sunday.

Using Romans 12 as his point of departure, Rev Roper spoke to the issue of biblical relationships and what they are about. He was of the view that relational skills and teachings were still relevant even in the pandemic.

Rev Roper pulled specifically from three key verses in the text to make three thought provoking points about Christian relationships:

**CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP IS A SPACE TO SERVE THE LORD:**

*Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves ... #10*

The preacher said that our relationships are derived from and sustained by a desire to serve the Lord.

Our relationships, like everything else, must be given to the Lord, the preacher said. He observed that most relationships are transactional but Christian relationships are born out of a desire to serve God.

Rev Roper told congregants that if serving the Lord is our ulterior motive and our ultimate goal, we will always guided empowered and assisted by God, beyond what we could anticipate. There’s always God’s power and presence on which can rely.

**IDENTIFY WITH THE LESS FORTUNATE, THE DIFFICULT AND THE SPITEFUL**

*Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited ... #16*

According to the preacher, Church should be a space in which people can relate to each other and get along with one another. Church is a space where harmony prevails.

Against this background therefore, the preacher urged us to respond to the words of Paul to be in solidarity with the less fortunate, the difficult and even those who hate us and spitefully use us. The preacher said that Christians have to learn to relate to people “high maintenance” people as well as those who may be downright evil.

Our relationship, according to Rev Roper, should mirror that of Christ and we should exercise love and tolerance for those who are different. There are those, he said, who do not fit the normal template, but as far as is possible, we should be in harmony with one another. Our gift to the society is social cohesion. We have to invest effort in creating an awareness that getting along is trending – worthwhile doing.

Alluding to a verse in the theme song of a popular Sitcom titled *Cheers,* the Rev Dr Roper asserted that Church should be a space where everybody knows your name and is always glad you came. The skill of relationship has broken down and Christians need to work harder to rebuild relationships.

**DO NOT REPAY EVIL WITH EVIL DO NOT PASS ON GOSSIP AND RUMOURS.**

*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone #17*

The preacher also urged us not to pursue revenge and not to pass on gossip and rumours. He encouraged us to end the cycle of acrimony and recriminations.

Rev Roper impressed on us to desist from accusing someone to the back. They’re not there to defend themselves. We become guilty of perpetuating slander, gossip and rumour when we accuse others without giving them an opportunity to defend themselves.

Most intriguingly, the preacher asserted that the best way to defeat an enemy is to make the enemy a friend. The principle is to be kind to those who are unkind to us.

The most effective way to win a battle is to build a relationship.