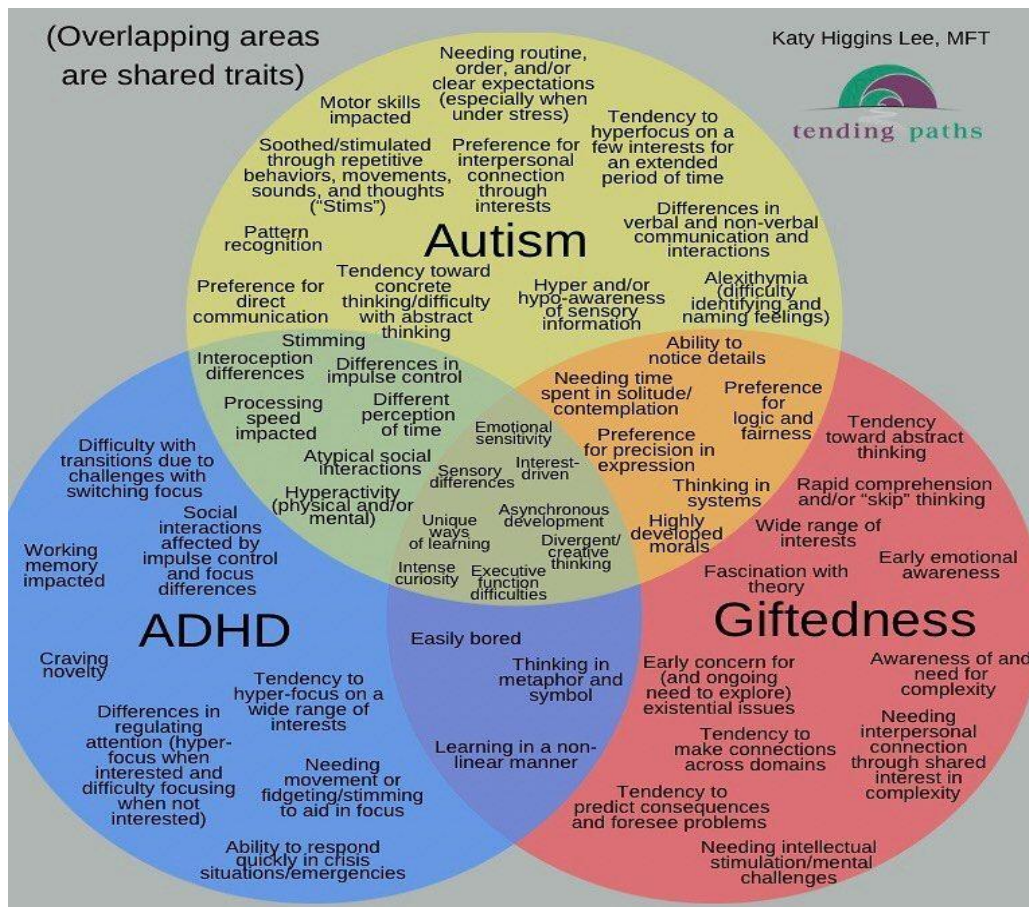


**Holy Trinity Sunningdale**  
**Sunday, October 9, 2022**  
**Readings – Psalm 131 and John 15:1-17**  
**Scripture and my faith journey**

My understanding of Revd. Jon’s instruction to the preaching team was to choose the scripture that is of importance to each of us. The 2 passages read this morning - John 15:1-17 and Psalm 131, I associate with my development and growth in faith. I need to give some background into how these passages came to define me. If I am assessed today by an educational psychologist, the diagnosis will probably be that of a neurodivergent learner accompanied by a diagram like this.



A number of brain studies have shown that people with learning or thinking differences are “wired” differently than their peers. In other words, some children are born with brains that think, learn and process information differently than others. But when I started school in the early 1960s nobody knew anything about neurodiversity. Adults in my world at that time had no guidance to work with children like me. No doubt there would have been many children and young people whose mental and neurological functions are different from what is considered typical or normal who like me struggled to learn in schools. The painful part is that I knew I was different and grew up thinking something was wrong with me.

My saving grace was that I had a champion – my dad! My father loved God with every fibre of his body, mind and soul. “God is good all the time and all the time God is good,” was my father’s creed. He knew and acknowledged that life is hard and challenging and all the more reason to find refuge in a good God!

My dad loved me – there is no questioning that. After a difficult day at school with teachers who out of sheer frustration from not knowing what to do would make judgmental comments about my ability or lack of it, my dad would reassure me that I am the very best. He always gave me an argument I could not fault. He would tell me – God gives only good gifts and I am a gift from God so I am perfect.

My father taught me to love God. It wasn’t easy for me because I had a mind that questions everything. I must have meaningful answers before I let something go. Aged 14, I set about finding answers to what is wrong with me. An uncle – a professor of chemistry, inadvertently told me I must become an expert to find out what is wrong with me. And when I asked how to become an expert, he said I have to do a PhD. So as a teenager struggling with learning, I decided I must do a doctorate degree.

My dad never doubted for one second and he stood by me till that PhD was achieved. Life interrupted with various challenges including finding myself in an abusive marriage. Through it all, my dad constant advice is “go to church, God is waiting to meet with you.”

The growth and maturing of my love for God happened so gradually. While on that journey, I came across John 15:1-17 and it became my go-to Bible passage. I was and I am still captivated by the “I am the true vine.” It emphasizes the sustaining power of Christ and it is only by remaining in him that I can be productive. This passage tells me Christ loved me first and all he asks of me is to remain in his love. Christ calls me his friend, and not his servant. And the highlight of the passage comes in verse 16 – “You did not choose me, I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit.” God chose me and gave me a purpose – my dad’s words of encouragement became crystal clear!

When I arrived at Holy Trinity in 2005, I came with John 15:1-17. I trust God, love and follow him. My questions about life had not gone away but I had created a folder titled “I don’t understand,” into which I dropped all the questions of life for when I see Christ face to face to give me the answers.

In the years between 2005 and 2022, like Job, out of the storms of life, God spoke. Like Job, God did not answer any of my questions, instead he asked me questions about what I know and understand of his character, his purposes and his plans. I confessed my ignorance and was led to embrace Psalm 131 - three verses packed with great spiritual truth and enlightenment. Charles Spurgeon referred to Psalm 131 as one of the shortest psalms to read but one of the longest to learn. He said that it's " a short ladder yet one that rises to great height."

This Psalm led me to the life of peace, contentment and tranquillity I had been searching for. But first, I had to get rid of the world’s noise - the noise of fretting, being self-preoccupied, being easily offended, being competitive or striving to be #1

and having all the answers. Psalm 131 taught me to stop foolishly attempting to grasp the wind. This psalm taught me to be content and to submit to the ways God wants to cultivate my life whether I understand what he is doing or not. Because it is in contentment and rest that I can remain in Christ.

I borrow words from Pete Greig's Sabbath blessing – when we know the grace to embrace our own finite smallness in the arms of God's infinite greatness, then the gravity of material things becomes lightened and the relativity of time slows down, then, God's image in us is restored and our imagination in God is re-stored.

I wonder what areas of your lives are bearing fruit in this season. Let us take a moment to thank God and to ask him how we can use the fruits we are bearing to bless others.

**Dolapo Ogunbawo**