

Sunday 7th March – Moving on!

- **Introduction:**

- The church is the hope for the world
- Eph 1 & 3
- Demonstrate fullness of life as God intended: abundant life
- To live life by a whole new set of values that are wholly different to the way others work.
- We are summoned to a new king, a different kingdom, a whole new world,
- We are called to live that now where we are imbedded in this world, in our jobs, in our homes, in our neighbourhoods, in our places of leisure.
- This amazing new way of living in accepting King Jesus, in allowing him to be Lord, saviour, the one who brings freedom, and new possibilities for life, is to be lived out here, for the benefit of others.
- The church is God's solution for the world.
- We as a community are caught up with God's loving salvation impulse for the world
 - We are missional as a community and ambassadors as individuals.
- That does not mean just lots of projects, it means understanding our identity as a people first of all. It means understanding that the way of living under the kingdom of God is God's way and the best way. Balance, community, friendship, rest, action, service, love, forgiveness, healing, faithfulness, trust, not worrying
- This is an exciting call, and important call
 - Not a P.S. to life a consumer choice, but church is both the corporate demonstration of all God wants, and also the means by which we learn to live that as individuals.
- Projects are corporate demonstrations of our community life, an overflow, natural expressions.

Background

- Where are we at. We have been going over 6 years in our current pattern of meeting
- Decided good time for a review
- Various inputs into that
 - Broadly:
 - Lots of things that we love about our church life
 - High levels of participation and ownership, messiness, generosity, lots of people included, creative and flexible approach, experimental, relational basis, discussion way of learning, JFC, FOOD!
 - Some things that we want to see change
 - Drawing in new people, too comfortable, reaching people not like us, common vision, pulling together, clarity on the future
 - And hence lots of vision for the future
- I think it was clear that we need to address things
 - Continuity for the good, leading on to what we want to see.
 - Change not for the sake of it, but rather constant change to help us move towards our dream
- Here's the thing: patterns of life/meeting are there to deliver values
 - So that is the starting point for any review, in fact any change.
 - Why, what do we want to do and who do we want to be.
- This is what we came up with (Our vision, God's vision...)
 - I wanted to frame them as "aspirations" or statements of intent.
 - They are for us to begin to imagine and get a full picture of as a corporate group of people, God's church
- Statements of Intent:
 - **We want to be a worshipping community, growing in our devotion to God**

- Worship as we know is often centred on our corporate act, primarily of singing, we want that to be good, lively, enjoyable maybe, drawing into the presence of God, finding their a place of him speaking and of transformation. A place where we connect with God – without that we shrivel
- but it is of course not only that
 - Romans 12:1 – offer your bodies as living sacrifices
 - Worship is our decision to live our lives, honouring God in every decision and every action.
 - Eph 5:1 – acts of loving service are acts of worship to God
 - 1 Cor 13 – our corporate act is a clash of cymbals in God’s ears if we are not living out the love of God to each other, and the world in our lives.
- **We want to be a growing, vibrant community, actively including all peoples**
 - We have always been about including people into our community life, allowing them to experience friendship, support, and the life of God on the midst of us.
 - It is one of the most challenging things about Jesus life, the people he ate with, the people he healed, the people he blessed.
 - So often these were non-people, people judged to be no bodies by the surrounding culture. The Gospel reaches and welcomes all comers
 - The Parable of the banquet: go and get them in from the highways and by-ways
 - Growing: “gospel is reaching more people” – but i’ll come back to this
- **We want to be a caring community, sharing all of life together**
 - Something that doesn’t surprise us, i am sure
 - We all know that as a church we are supposed to care for each other
 - As we have mentioned we know that our care should extend beyond our borders and express itself to others too
 - But it is another thing to say that we are good at it.
 - Who are you sharing your life with? Who do you call, visit? Make meals for, have round?
 - One of things that we need to address is how that works across the home churches
 - We need to accept the challenge
- **We want to be a community of radical, faith-filled disciples, becoming and making dedicated followers of Jesus**
 - Jesus didn’t come to make “Christians”, but disciples
 - A call to a radical obedience
 - How do we make disciples, not Christians?
 - How do we grow in our own discipleship? Are we too comfortable? Too settled?
 - How do we live a life of faith?
 - The issue of learning is discipleship
- **We want to be a community of the Word and the Spirit, knowing Spirit empowered lives**
 - People of the book
 - Feeding; helping us live in the story
 - People living in the power of the Spirit
 - Gifts
 - Fruit
 - IT IS A CHARACTERISTIC OF US AS A PEOPLE
 - Not as a meeting activity only, but as a lifestyle – what is the Spirit saying to you at the moment?
- **We want to be creative and varied in our expressions of church for the sake of God’s mission**
 - We have got to see church in new ways to meet people where they are at
 - It moves and reforms itself in each new culture & sub-culture
 - We intend to keep our experimental, creative edge to what we are about, it is built into our DNA.
 - Because we believe in the church and we believe in God’s mission

- We want to see all sorts of churches planted: home churches cafe churches, messy churches, tidy churches, supper churches, congregations – all for the sake of God’s mission!!
 - Not just disciples but communities
 - **We want to be a generous community, making a difference practically in the world**
 - Generosity
 - Of God
 - More than expected
 - Overflow
 - That is the way we are going to make a difference
 - Eg Food Bag project
 - **We want to be connected with God’s wider family both in our participation the Salt & Light Family of Churches, and locally with other churches in Northampton**
 - Connection
 - We are not and do not want to be an isolated church
 - Connections for life and mission
 - Generous in that too
 - We are part of God’s wider family
 - And a specific family of churches
- **Measuring mission success metrics**
 - “Works of Service” (Eph4): This is the end goal of church, discipleship and ministry, and as such is an organising principle for church life.
 - Success factors are important to clarify what we are aiming at and what we want to see happen in terms of mission and growth. Our success factors are:
 - **Who are we reaching, loving and blessing?**
 - Eg food bags, give away’s, JFC, in our lives etc etc
 - **Who are we including?**
 - In all aspects of church life
 - **Who are we discipling?**
 - Disciples are being made, whether or not they make altogether gatherings
- Lots to do be part of, express
 - How do we do that, together
 - Make a difference in an effective way
- **I believe that we need a step change**
 - We need to re-jig, to draw us together to achieve what we dream of.
- **How?**
 - Mission Teams:
 - We need teams to take pray, plan and sort out our various forms of mission that we want to see
 - For example we need a team to sort the Food bag project
 - We already have a team for JFC, but we also need a team for the JFC families
 - Long-term relationship, dreamed of something that reaches
 - Need a team to focus and see that come about
 - We will do something like alpha again
 - Want to do treasure hunting – can have a team.
 - Other possibilities
 - Big shift is our pattern of Sunday meetings:
 - (Show diagram)
 - From 1-3 to 3-1 or in fact 3-2
 - Opening for Parklands
 - Possibility for common vision relationships
 - But how to do that in continuity

- 3-fold pattern
 - Sunday 2: Preach,
 - Sunday 3: eat
 - Sunday 4: Small group based
- **A gathering point and a sending point**
- **Maybe** something like this

Sunday1	Week1	Sunday2	Week2	Sunday3	Week3	Sunday4	Week4
Home Church	Mission Teams	Altogether	Home Church	Altogether	Planning/ Preparing/Training	Altogether	Prayer/ Discipleship
Active Mission		Active Mission		Active Mission		Active Mission	
Prayer/Discipleship		Prayer/Discipleship		Prayer/Discipleship		Prayer/Discipleship	

- Where to meet Altogether
 - Parklands can gave us from 10am, and provide a 3rd room
 - Sporadic at first while we get our bookings in
 - We will be flexible around them
 - Start on 11th April for a 5 week run!
- Home Church
 - Relational base, 2 times per month
 - Plus opportunities for including
- Timescales
 - Conversation
 - Practical Plans
 - When, what dates

The issue is who is God calling us to be and how can we live it out better and see happen all that God has laid on our hearts.

In that sense we will always be changing and pursuing ways in which to build on where we have got to and journey on to the future.

“the church is a people on the move, breathlessly trying to keep up with Jesus”!!