



christ church
moreton

A
Vision
for
Christ church

CHRIST CHURCH
HOME-GROUPS
Autumn 2013

Great is the Lord and most
worthy of praise; his greatness
no one can fathom.
One generation will commend
your works to another; they
will tell of your mighty acts.

Psalm 145:3-4

CHRIST CHURCH VISION 2017

- 1. To DEEPEN our commitment** to Christ and to one another
- 2. To INCREASE our relevance** to the people of Moreton
- 3. To RESPOND with compassion** to the needs in our community
- 4. To DEVELOP our evangelism** within our community and among our friends

Week beginning 28 th October	Home-Group session 1
Wednesday 6 th November	PRAYER MEETING
Week beginning 11 th November	Home Group session 2
Week beginning 18 th November	Home Group session 3
Week beginning 25 th November	Home Group session 4
Wednesday 4 th December	Advent Informal Communion

A vision for Christ church

During 2012 our PCC thought and prayed about the things we most need to be doing over the next 5 years as we seek to be a WELL church. They identified 4 key goals for us – our Vision 2017.

Over the first 3 Wednesdays in 2013 we met together as home-groups to think about these goals: What do they mean? How can we make sure that by 2017 we have begun to make these things a reality? These 4 home-group sessions follow on from that.

1. TO DEEPEN our commitment to Christ and to one another

WELCOME

Where would you most like to be right now?

WORSHIP

One of the most amazing things the Bible tells us is that God loves us. Either sing, read, or listen to Stuart Townend's song 'How deep the Father's love for us.'

WORD

I'm sure that most Christians would say that commitment to Christ has to be central to being a Christian, and that commitment to other Christians is an important part of the Christian life. But putting that into practice can be a challenge, because I think it would be fair to say that commitment is not something that our society as a whole could be noted for. We are familiar with the way relationships can so easily break down because people no longer want to work at them, but the same is true in other areas of life. In 1971, the Conservative and Labour parties had a combined membership of 2 million; by 2011 that had dropped to less than 370,000. And in his book 'Bowling Alone' (published in 2000), the sociologist Robert Putnam showed that in the USA although more people went bowling than 20 years earlier, far less of them joined leagues. People didn't want that level of commitment.

So for us to set the goal of increasing our commitment is rather counter-cultural!

Read Mark 12:28-44

- What does it mean to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength?
- What things stop us from doing it?

The teacher of the law asked Jesus for the most important commandment, but Jesus replied by giving him two commandments.

- What is the relationship between the two?

The teacher of the law agrees, and says that loving the Lord and your neighbour is more important than sacrifices and burnt offerings (v.33).

- What are some of the things that people do today to try to please God?

The teachers of the law loved to look impressive. In what ways might we be tempted to try to 'look good' in church? What is the problem with doing that?

Jesus goes on to quote from Psalm 110, showing that it points to him being Lord.

- But in view of what Jesus has just said, what does it mean for us to call Jesus 'Lord'?

- In contrast to the teachers of the law and the rich men, what motivated the widow's behaviour? (v.41-42)
- How does she fulfil the great commandment?

Read 1 John 3:11-20 and 1 John 4:7-12

- How do these passages describe love?
- Why is love so important in the church?
- What things might stop us from loving one another?

In 1 John 4:16, John makes one of the great statements of the Bible – *God is love*. Usually we read this as a description of what God is like. But it can just as easily tell us what real love is like.

- From what the Bible tells us about God, what sort of characteristics should Christian love have?
- What do you think John means when he says we shouldn't love each other *with words or speech*?
- And what does it mean to love *in actions and in truth*?

- Do you find it easy to put this into practice with your friends?
- How about with the other members of your home-group?
- And what about with people you just don't get on with?

WORK

'let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.' (Hebrews 10:24-25)

What could you do to make sure that our services on Sunday are times of encouragement?

What about the people at Christ Church who you don't really know? How could you build relationships with them and encourage them?

2. TO INCREASE our relevance to the people of Moreton

WELCOME

What is your earliest memory?

WORSHIP

Psalm 145:9 tells us that the Lord is good to all, and has compassion on all he has made. Use the psalm together to praise God for his goodness.

WORD

I put the words 'Church' and 'irrelevant' into Google, and it came up with over 14 million references. Of course, many of them would be Christians arguing against the church being irrelevant, but it does show that relevance is a big issue for us.

It is well known that church attendance is in decline. Although the decline has levelled out recently, between 1980 and 2010 church attendance in the UK declined by 40%, whilst membership declined by 30%. In the latest census, 73% of the people in Moreton classed themselves as Christians, yet only around 2% would attend church for anything other than baptisms, weddings or funerals.

So – the goal of increasing our relevance is both urgent, and challenging.

Read Luke 5:12-31

Throughout his ministry crowds flocked to Jesus, as we see them doing here. Obviously they thought that Jesus was relevant.

- What was it about Jesus which drew people to him?

- Are there things that we can learn from this about being a relevant church?

Read through Luke's gospel and you will find several references to Jesus praying. Here the crowds were flocking to hear Jesus and to be healed by him. But despite this, Jesus often left the crowds and took time out to pray (verses 15-16 literally says that it was while people were coming to him that Jesus went off to pray).

- How might this relate to our goal of being relevant?

The four men who brought their friend to Jesus knew what they wanted Jesus to do.

- But what did Jesus see as being the paralysed man's greatest need?

- What was the significance of Jesus also healing the man physically?

- According to v.32, why did Jesus come to earth?

- How can we relate this to a society like ours which largely has no concept of being sinners?

Although Jesus did regularly go to the synagogue, most of his encounters with people were in other places – here he joins Levi and his friends for a banquet.

- Where are the places we need to go if we want to be relevant to our community?

When we were talking about this at Home Groups Together, one helpful comment was that we need to show the heart of Jesus to our community.

- How might we do that?

Read Matthew 5:13-16

Before refrigeration, salt was used to keep meat from rotting.

- What does Jesus' statement 'You are the salt of the earth' tell us about society and the role of the church in society?
- Can you think of anything that has been in the news recently which shows that society is decaying?
- And what about more locally? Can you think of examples in your own neighbourhood / workplace where things are wrong? What would it mean practically to act as salt there?

Jesus warns against losing our saltiness?

- What might cause this?

Jesus second statement is 'You are the light of the world.' As salt, we are called to prevent decay, the spread of sin in our society.

- What do you think being called light means we should also be doing?
- In what ways might we hide our light?
- According to Jesus, what will happen when people see our good deeds?
- How might this help our quest for relevance?

WORK

We've thought about how Jesus was relevant, and about the challenge to be salt and light in our community. Are there members of your group who are already doing that? How could you support them and work with them?

Are there things which as a church we could do to be salt and light in Moreton?

3. TO RESPOND with compassion to the needs in our community

WELCOME

Which living person do you most admire?

WORSHIP

Psalm 103:13 tells us that ‘as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. Thank God for the ways in which he has shown his compassion to you.

WORD

REM’s song ‘Everybody hurts’ was first released more than 20 years ago, yet still regularly makes it into lists of the 100 greatest songs. Maybe that is because it does talk about something almost universal:

"When your day is long and the night

The night is yours alone

When you're sure you've had enough of this life, well hang on

Don't let yourself go

Everybody cries and everybody hurts sometimes"

There are few people who go through life without hurting. And that means that one of the most needed characteristics is compassion – getting alongside someone who is suffering and sharing their pain.

4 times in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus is described as ‘having compassion’.

Read Matthew 9:35-38

- How did Jesus show his compassion?

Read Matthew 14:13-14

- How did Jesus show his compassion?

Read Matthew 15:32

- How did Jesus show his compassion?

Read Matthew 20:29-34

- How did Jesus show his compassion?

From these 4 examples, what might it mean for Christ Church to show the same compassion that Jesus showed?

Read Colossians 3:12-17

Paul tells us that we should be clothing ourselves with compassion.

- What do you think he means?

- What other things should we be clothing ourselves with?
How do these tie together?

- What do you think it means to 'let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts'?
- And what does it mean to 'let the message of Christ dwell among you richly'?
- How would doing this help you to be compassionate?

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Paul writes: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.* How can the ways in which we have experienced God's compassion guide us in showing compassion to others?

WORK

The scale of need in Moreton is way beyond our ability to respond to, so we need to know where God is calling us to be involved. In what ways are we already responding to need in our community? Are there ways in which we could do this more effectively? And are there new things the Lord is calling us to do? Pray for wisdom to know where he wants us to be involved.

4. TO DEVELOP our evangelism within our community and among our friends

WELCOME

Who would you invite to your dream dinner party?

WORSHIP

At its most basic evangelism is sharing with others what God has done for you. Spend some time thinking about what God has done for you, and then praise him for it.

WORD

Think of the people you meet everyday – your friends, your family, your neighbours, your work colleagues, your club members. Think of the mother pushing the buggy, the man walking the dog, the children playing in the park. Some you know well, others you don't know at all. Do any of them not need Jesus?

As Christians we know that everyone needs Jesus but many of us don't find it easy to talk about him. It just doesn't seem to come naturally. We can talk about the weather, the weekend, the sports results even the price of petrol but when it comes to talking about Jesus we seem, well – lost for words.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5v10-21

- What do we learn about Christ's love in v14-15?
- What did God achieve through Christ's death (v17-21)?
- What does this mean for our attitude towards other people (v16, 20)?
- From this passage, what do you think should be our main motivation for reaching out to other people with the message of Christ?

Read: 1 Peter 3v13-18

- When it comes to talking about Jesus what or who might we fear?
- How should we respond to such fears (v13-15)?
- What does it mean to '*set Christ apart as Lord*' (v15)?
- What is '*the reason for hope*' that we have as Christians?
- Do you feel '*prepared to give the reason for the hope that you have*'?

- How should we speak of this hope (v15-16)? Why is that important?

Read Acts 2:42-47

- Look at verse 47. What do you think was leading other people to become Christians?
- How does this compare with Christ Church?
- Is Christ Church doing things which demonstrate God's reality to others?
- Are there other things we should be doing?

WORK

Once again Christmas is approaching, and still it is a time when opportunities exist for sharing the Good News. Many people do enjoy carol services and midnight communion.

So how can we make the most of those opportunities this year?

CHRIST CHURCH, MORETON

We want to be a **W**elcoming Church

Because Jesus welcomed all who came to him.

an **E**vangelising Church

*Because we believe that everyone has the right to hear the
Good News of Jesus*

a **L**oving Church

*Because Jesus commanded his followers
to love one another*

a **L**earning Church

*Because we are in the business of making disciples,
and disciples must always be learners.*