



St Paul's
Little
Eaton

The way Ahead:
Partnership in the Gospel

Our Vision

We do not invent our own vision. Our task as individual Christians and as a church is to bring our hopes and purposes in line with what God wants for us. God has revealed his purposes for the world, and is active through his people to achieve those ends. Our role is to be wise and discerning as to how the Lord is directing us, and active in our obedience to that end. After all, “many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails” (Proverbs 19:21). It is not our role to sit back and think that God will just take us where He wants us to be. God has called us to be responsible stewards of the time, energy, opportunities, gifts and resources that He has given us. In short, God calls us to be partners, co-workers with Him in His great task; which means prayerfully making decisions about what we aim for and work towards together.

I hope that as you read and pray through this booklet, you will be encouraged by what God has already done at St Paul’s Little Eaton, and excited to think of what he could do in the next couple of years. It is my prayer that you will want to be part of it!

Our ultimate Aim

Everything we do should have the ultimate aim of trying to **GLORIFY GOD** in our lives. Loving the Lord wholeheartedly means wanting all that we do to honour and serve him, that He may be glorified through our part in his wonderful plan of salvation. At the heart of all this is **PRAYER**, which expresses our devotion to and reliance on the Lord alone, rather than putting our confidence in ourselves or in the world. As we seek to get behind God’s vision for his world and his purpose for the church, we need to realise our total dependence on him.

How will we do this? In four main ways... they are the strap line for our church:

REACH into the community, giving opportunities for people to investigate the Christian faith, and making a positive contribution to people's lives.

TEACH each other in our knowledge of God, and in using the talents and resources he has given us as individuals.

TEND to the spiritual, relational, and practical needs of each other in loving care and fellowship.

SEND men and women to serve God in their workplaces and their communities, and to support the mission of the worldwide church.

Planning for Growth

God does not command us to be a growing church – it is for God to bring people into relationship with Him. God does command us to be faithful and obedient, as we live out the gospel in our lives. Thus numerical growth should never be a measure of authentic Christian ministry.

Nonetheless, we do have the general expectation and confidence that God will build his church, and that as the gospel goes out, those whom the Lord has chosen will respond in repentance and faith. Thus part of our vision is to plan for growth, whilst acknowledging that God may or not bless us in this way. The point is to be ready!

The point of refocusing our Vision is not to change completely what we are about, but rather to focus on how we specifically hope, under God, to fulfil our vision in the year ahead. So let's now think about each of the five headings: Prayer, firstly; and then Reach Teach, Tend, and Send.

Prayer

‘Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.’

(Colossians 4:2)

The heartbeat of any church should be its prayer, both corporately and privately. Praying together has been the practice of the church since its foundation, as a means of grace for God’s people. Praying for others and being prayed for is a fundamental act of love and fellowship that God commands us to express. Yet praying doesn’t come naturally to us. St Paul’s has been regular in its prayer together, but the Church Council feels that it’s right that we further develop our corporate prayer.

Aim: To be a church that is wholly committed to praying together and individually for the work of the gospel in and through us.

Specifics:

- Provide more opportunities for us to be praying together and increase the number of people attending the church prayer meetings



- Increase confidence in praying with and for each other

How?

- A topical series on prayer will be preached on what prayer is, how it reflects our relationship with God in the gospel, how we are to pray, and what we are to pray for.

- Change the regular pattern of our prayer meetings to a monthly Saturday morning Prayer Meeting and fortnightly Tuesday evening meetings as normal.
- Hold a training session for those who lead intercessions in church, and for those interested in joining the rota.
- Encourage the forming of prayer triplets within the congregation. These informal groups would be formed to meet the specific requirements of the triplet. The aim is these triplets would be places where trust and friendship is developed and where honest and open prayer requests can be sought.
- Encourage prayer in growth groups and help those within the groups to be more confident in praying out loud.

I commend to you the importance of watchfulness over your prayers. Prayer is that point in religion at which you must be most of all on your guard. Here it is that true religion begins; here it flourishes, and here it decays. Tell me what a man's prayers are, and I will soon tell you the state of his soul.

J.C. Ryle

Reaching

‘Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...’

(Matthew 28:19)

It is striking to note that Jesus expects his disciples (those who follow him) to be those who are active in making disciples of others – in other words, to reach others with the Good News of Jesus is a fundamental part of being a Christian.

We can think about reaching out at a number of different levels to those who are not yet Christians, because we are all different, as are the people we are trying to reach. The starting point is considering

Nietzsche once commented that if ever he was to consider becoming a Christian, the Christians would have to look a lot more like Christ. Let us pray that we will.

David Jackman

our personal relationships – family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and acquaintances. Much of this happens in the natural course of our lives as we introduce them to other Christians, and share our lives with them. But as we live lives of ‘salt

and light’ in the world, we need to be mindful of where not-yet-Christians might be at. For some we will need to work at building respect and trust. Many are suspicious of the Christian faith, even hostile to it. In the past there was an inherent goodwill towards the church – but that is rapidly disappearing. For others, we need to present to them the relevance of the gospel. The gospel isn't just for religious-minded people, but has something to say about issues which are important to all people. Finally, there are others whom we need to directly challenge with the call of the gospel, to repent of their sin and turn to Christ in faith.

Of course, the main focus of our evangelism is our Sunday services. They are to be a ‘shop window’ for the Christian faith. But, obviously, not everyone can or will come on Sunday, so we must also go to them, just as Jesus modelled.

Aim: To be a church that is active and passionate about reaching others for Christ.

Specifics:

- Encourage and train church members to be more confident in sharing the gospel with others.
- Focus efforts on reaching young families in the village.

How?

- Communicate clearly to the church the evangelistic priorities of the church, and encourage the church to be planning and praying to make the most of evangelistic opportunities.
- Reach more families, a group missing from the church, by starting, after Easter, a monthly Sunday afternoon informal and accessible 'service' in the Church Hall, geared at building relationships and reaching families who find 'church' difficult.
- Establish a simple crèche to encourage parents of toddlers to stay in services.
- Highlight and equip a small number of people in the church to be more intentional, confident and able to articulate the Gospel in our community.
- Work with other churches in putting on a series of evangelistic events and services next spring, coinciding with the visit of Roger Carswell to Derby.
- Establish occasional men's events with a range of relationship-building activities.

Teaching

‘Him we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.’

(Colossians 1:28)

It is the word of God that achieves the work of God. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit, and is used by Him to bring about transformation. As a church, we want God’s word to be at the centre of our life together. And that means that central to our vision for the year ahead must be the areas in which we hope to be taught, challenged and changed by God’s word. Our Sunday gatherings will continue to be the main focus of our family life, and a time when all ages come together to give thanks to God, and to encourage one another.

The evangelical faith is not a peculiar or esoteric version of the Christian faith. It is the Christian faith. It is not a recent innovation. The evangelical faith is original, biblical, apostolic Christianity.

John Stott

Growth Groups are one of the main ways in which we seek to teach, encourage and build one another up. In 2011 we hope to see the number of groups increasing. We will encourage every Growth Group to identify and help members in preparing and leading bible studies. We will put in place a structured training program for our Growth Group leaders, to support them in the great work that they do. We will also be producing resources to help Growth Groups think through how they could be reaching out together.

Aim: To be a church that equips and encourages its people to be mature in Christ, confident in the faith, and faithful in serving.

Specifics:

- Encourage more of the congregation from being “passengers” to being “partners” in the life of the church.
- Increase the number of people in Growth Groups.
- Seeing people mature in Christ, confident in expressing their faith, and living out a faithful life of obedience to Christ.

How?

- David will undertake a “pastoral visitation” of everyone on the Electoral Roll, inviting them to undertake a spiritual health check.
- Be more intentional about training others to lead bible studies, both in small groups and one-to-one.
- Communicate expectations of being a part of St Paul’s, including regular attendance, giving, prayer and serving.
- Develop the spiritual leadership of the church, especially with those having teaching responsibility in Sunday Services.



Tending

‘By this all men will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another.’

(John 13:35)

In a busy and often increasingly harsh culture, the safety and belonging that the church offers should be a sanctuary for a broken world. Christian love for each other should display the beauty of God’s grace to the world, motivated by God’s love at work in us.

‘But after we have done our best to communicate to a lost world, still we must never forget that the final apologetic which Jesus gives is the observable love of true Christians for true Christians’

Francis Schaeffer

Aim: To be a church family that shares genuine love and concern for each other, supports, encourages and challenges.

Specifics:

- Teach what pastoral care is, who should be doing it and why.
- Developing a church family where we actively get involved with each other to help, stimulate and challenge our walk with God - to "stir one another up to love and good works".
- Work towards finding ways of more effectively organising specific pastoral care as needed.

How?

- Prayer triplets, Growth Groups, and St Paul’s Fellowship will continue to be the primary network for care for each other. The spiritual health checks to help highlight spiritual needs of people.
- Thinking about developing and formalising our Pastoral Care, with the view to establishing a small team to support those under the umbrella of our church family in appropriate ways.

Sending

‘But just as you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.’

(2 Corinthians 8:7)

‘Sending’ as a church is costly, as we give our time and resources away, and as we say goodbye to brothers and sisters in the church family who leave to serve in other churches or in the mission field.

Aim: To be a church that gives out to the wider good of society and the world.

Specifics:

- Raise the profile of our Mission Partners at St Paul’s, regularly praying for them in services, Prayer Meetings and privately.

‘Let us give up our work, our plans, ourselves, our lives, our loved ones, our influence, our all, right into [God’s] hand; and then, when we have given all over to Him, there will be nothing left for us to be troubled about.’

Hudson Taylor

- Give sacrificially to support the work beyond St Paul’s.

How?

- Give at least £2000 of our income in 2011 to our partners and other worthwhile causes.
- Support John and Sian Newton-Webb, working with OMF in Japan.
- Support the Barnabas Fund, Langham Partnership International, and Ventures as our Mission Partner organisations this year.



Fulfilling The Vision

Thank you for taking time to read this booklet.

The Church Council has spent a great deal of time thinking, discussing, and praying about the Way Ahead for us. I hope that as you've read through our plans, it has made you excited and expectant at what the year ahead will bring.

How will we be able to achieve this vision? Through **partnership!**

First of all through partnership with God, as we seek to do his will, and as we look for him to be at work in building his church. And secondly, in partnership with each other, as we use the gifts and resources that God has given us individually, to serve and build up the rest of the church family.

The only remaining question is how **you** can get involved in making this vision a reality.