

St. Matt's Midweek Update – 6th May 2022



I hope your week has been ok and you can enjoy the sunshine this weekend.

This week Chris wanted to share a bit about our vision as a church as we move out of the pandemic (which is what we talked about at the APCM last week) ...

Vision – past and present

For many years, St. Matt's vision has been to "Ignite passion for Jesus" as a church. We have wanted to not just be Jesus focused but passionate about our relationship with Jesus. We live in a fast-changing world, and we are still trying to make sense of everything that has happened in our lives and in church over the past couple of years. So much has changed, but that desire for our relationship with Jesus to be at the centre of everything we do remains constant.

Recently the PCC and Leadership has spent time thinking about what our priorities ought to be as we seek to rebuild church life after Covid.

At the heart of that is a Hybrid approach to Church.

It's encouraging to see physical attendance growing on Sundays in church. It has been a difficult season - people we love have moved on from St. Matt's and that is always hard, but new people have joined. Some still feel the need to hold back from attending in person and a significant number are still part of our church community online, and they are just as important to us as those in the building.

Participation on teams has continued to grow, and it's exciting to see how our value of serving is still at the centre of church life.

The financial challenge

One of our ongoing challenges is still finance. We have experienced a drop of income which is probably no great surprise when we consider the pressure on individuals at this time. This has meant we have not been able to reappoint a youth minister and we are much more dependent on our amazing volunteer team. As the year moves on and the cost of energy impacts us further, we will be increasingly challenged just to maintain church never mind grow areas of ministry. At this time, we do not want to make anyone feel pressurised to increase their giving, but we would like to ask you to prayerfully consider how you can play your part in this area.

I began by saying that the PCC and Leadership Team had spent time thinking about what our priorities ought to be at this time. To do this they reflected on every area of church life - worship, discipleship, fellowship, pastoral care, children and youth, and community engagement. There were lots of potential priorities at this time but in the end, they homed in on what they believed to be the three key ones.

The first relates to Children and Youth Ministry – we all know that young people have been disproportionately disadvantaged by Covid, with their education interrupted, and long periods of isolation.

So, in this area we believe the priority is to

Find and establish routes to grow relationships / community amongst young people.

This is vital for three reasons:

1. It's important for their mental health and wellbeing and potential to flourish
2. We don't grow in our faith in isolation. If we want our young people to be passionate about Jesus, it needs to be on the foundation of strong interpersonal relationships.

3. Our inability to appoint a youth minister at this time means that it is all the more important that our young people are able to establish strong relationships.

It will be no surprise to you that we believe for this to happen we need to build a strong volunteer team to support our young people and enable them to grow these relationships.

The second priority relates to Fellowship.

As I have already alluded, church has undergone a period of massive change, both in terms of people (those that have gone and those that have joined with us), but also in terms of the patterns of church. We are not only physically present in the building but also online. Many of the things we have done and the patterns of life we enjoyed have been disrupted. In many ways the whole church family is experiencing similar challenges as our young people, and we believe we need to invest in building relationships right across the board.

So, the second priority is geared at addressing this issue by:

Planning and using social events to give opportunities to build relationship.

One of the great things about this is that anyone can participate. Yes, we may organise church wide opportunities to build relationships, but anyone can invite someone out for coffee or to go for a walk or share a meal or BBQ. The early church began by being all together in one place. It was in that context that the Holy Spirit was poured out and their lives were set on fire. We believe we need to actively rebuild relationships if we are to see our own lives ignited with a passion for Jesus.

Both these priorities are short term and urgent, but the final priority is more long term but also of great significance.

The success of the Community Larder has been one of the highlights of recent years. It is sad that such a need exists in our community at this time. We should be encouraged by the way Jan, Liz and the team from both church and the wider community have responded to this need. The success of the Larder asks question of us, both about how we can serve our community as a church and share our faith in the most practical of terms, but also about how we can work with the trust that owns the Bethel building to develop it as a centre for community work.

Because of this the church leadership also believe our longer-term goal ought to be:

Following the success of the Community Larder in the Bethel building, to explore the further development of the building as a church and community resource in conjunction with the Bethel Trust.

This is a massive undertaking and not a simple one either. The legal relationship between St. Matthew's Church and the Bethel Trust needs to be resolved (and this is in process), the building is in very poor repair and the work to transform it into the sort of resource we want it to be, would be significant and expensive.

The first step is to consider how the building can best be used and then how that can be realistically realised. Whether this development is ultimately possible or not, we should not lose sight of the goal which remains the same – not just developing a building but to serve our community and to seek to share our faith in the One who changes lives in practical ways. To continue to ignite passion for Jesus and see people transformed by him....

(Chris Wicks, Vicar)

Notices

If you would like to read the full **minutes of the APCM** (our annual church meeting), here they are [APCM Minutes 2022.pdf](#)

This Sunday...

We have Pat Blanchard visiting us this Sunday, for our 10am and 5pm services. Pat has been one of our mission links, working with CMS in Peru. She is retiring from mission so is coming to share with us this week.

We have groups for our children and youth in our 10am service - primary school aged children will go up to the Bethel Hall with Lois, and the youth will be meeting in the youth office with Natalie. The church centre will have toys in for preschool children to use with their parents.

Cups and saucers for Charis' wedding...

Thank you to everyone who offered cups and saucers for Charis' wedding .

If possible could they be dropped off at church or 72 Powdermill Lane before the 16th May.

If you would like us to pick them up please let me know.

Thank you, Carole and Julia

Hubs...

Sewing Bee Hub is on this evening, 7.30pm at Ruth's house, for anyone who enjoys sewing and sharing patterns and ideas.

Knitting Hub is on Monday evening, 7.30pm in the church centre, for anyone who likes knitting with others and working towards projects for charity.

Safeguarding training...

Thank you to everyone who has done their safeguarding training over the last few weeks.

If you still need to do yours, you will have had an email from me. Please can you complete this as soon as possible or let me know if there is a problem with completing it?

Chris' study leave...

Chris will be starting the second half of his study leave on Monday, so he and Carole won't be around in church for the next 2 months. Lois and I will be in the office and holding the fort, so do be in touch if you need any help with anything.

Have a good weekend.