

7th October 2013

Dear St Matthew's,

I'm writing to you to let you know about a couple of exciting decisions that the PCC made at our last meeting. We believe that the changes outlined below will help us to grow in numbers and depth of discipleship and enable us to better fulfil our vision to *'Live for Jesus'*.

You may know that St Matthew's has 4 teams that help lead the delivery of our vision. They are the Knowing, Growing and Going Teams and our Buildings team. They are each made up of staff members, PCC members and others. The Knowing Team leads our discipleship (e.g. our worship, teaching and prayer life), the Growing Team leads our community and evangelism (e.g. mid-week groups and Alpha), the Going Team leads our engagement in mission (e.g. Alpha, Stay and Play, Knightstone, Party in the Garden, Dove Street visiting etc) and the Buildings Team leads the maintenance, use and development of our church building to serve our vision.

You may also remember that back in May this year we held a day of listening together as a church. The purpose of that day was to listen to God and to each other for the direction of St Matthew's. Since that day I, the PCC and others have been praying and discerning what we believe God might be saying. Just before the summer I promised that I would write to you to inform you of the outcome of that discernment. That is what I am doing now.

Focus

The first and major area of discernment is about our focus as a church, 'What are we, at St Matthew's, all about'? What is it that God is calling us to prioritise above other activities and how do we make those decisions? Our discernment has led us to three 'focal areas'.

- 1 **Discipleship.** This means continuing to nourish, nurture and equip our community to follow Jesus, growing into disciples of every age who live out faith 7 days a week. This area includes worship, prayer, teaching, evangelism, retreats, being a Christian in the world and all activities that help us to live for Jesus.
- 2 **Children and Youth.** This means being more intentional in building on the relationships that we currently have through our many activities with children, young people and their families in order to serve the community and make disciples of Jesus. This includes Toddlers, Playgroup, uniformed organisations, Stay and Play, school's connections, PGI Friday, the summer Football project, Messy Church and Sunday groups.
- 3 **Serving the community.** This means developing our engagement with, and serving of, the communities local to the church building and our mission partners. Through this service our church family needs to continue to have 'open edges' that enable people to be welcomed and easily join in with the life of the church, whilst being God's servants in the world.

We are now in the process of asking the 4 teams and a newly formed Youth and Children's Team to put together action plans to lead us in focusing on these priorities, before bringing them back to PCC for final approval in November. This may mean stopping some things or realigning them to the focal areas above. Do pray for them as they do that.

Worship Pattern

The second decision is about our worship pattern. The following proposed changes are connected to the priorities above and reflect all we are learning about our growing church and how to encourage continued growth. At present we have a worship pattern which includes a 9am service of Holy Communion twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Sundays, a weekly 10.30am service with

children's groups and Communion on the 1st and 3rd, and a weekly 6.30 pm service with communion on the 2nd and 4th. The 9am service started last January and has been well received, drawing in existing church members and also some new members.

During the past year there have been huge changes in personnel. Joyce and Tanya have left us, Minty has been ordained Deacon and Caleb and Billy have just moved on. Our numbers are also beginning to plateau at each service. If we are serious about seeking growth, leading worship that nurtures discipleship, taking seriously the place of children and young people, and planning worship that is varied enough across each day to offer 'access points' for different types of people; then we believe we need to change our pattern and make some adjustments to the content of our services.

So the PCC is proposing that from January 2014 our worship pattern changes to be 3 distinct services each Sunday, each with a flavour of St Matthew's and each maintaining the creativity and teaching that we value highly. We remain one church but with three expressions of worship. There will still be quality children's and young people's groups at the 10.30 and we will endeavour to maintain the high quality of music and teaching that enables us to worship God.

So what will be different? We will have a weekly 9am service. We will be more intentional about providing all age worship at the beginning of each 10.30 service. As we did at Pentecost we will hold a single *all together* Sunday morning service with a 'bring and share' lunch when there is a 5th Sunday and on St Matthew's day (which always falls in September). We will reduce our Holy Communion services from 6 per month to 4 (one per week; 2 at the 9am service, 1 at the 10.30am service and 1 at the 6.30pm service).

The pattern we are proposing is summarised below.

1 Church: 3 Expressions that aim to nurture a community of disciples of Jesus so that we can *live for Jesus* through the week.

- 9am A simple reflective start to Sunday worship. The service includes creative use of liturgy, some music and space for reflection. Holy Communion is twice a month, on the 2nd and 4th Sundays. We aim to finish at 9.45 sharing coffee together.
- 10.30am Lively band-led worship. We begin all together before our children and young people go to their groups. Once a month, on the first Sunday, the children and young people return for Holy Communion. Coffee is served before and after this service.
- 6.30pm An informal worshipping community that meets around coffee, tea, cake and biscuits in the hall, seeking to learn together and be renewed to welcome the coming week. We share Holy Communion once a month on the 3rd Sunday.

I commend these proposals to you and ask that you prayerfully reflect on them. If you would like to talk to someone about anything in this letter, ask questions, or make suggestions then please do contact me or one of your PCC members - their names and photos are on the notice board.

I pray that these proposals will lead to growth in the kingdom of God, not just at St Matthew's but across the whole city.

Yours



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