

A RENEWED VISION

VISION-SHARING EVENING, 9th SEPTEMBER 2020

INTRODUCTION

Briefing notes by Tim Diaper

Right back at the beginning of the year (if you can remember that far back!) I chose a really glorious, really key verse as our verse for the year. 1 Peter 2:9 – ‘but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.’

I chose that verse because it is a powerful descriptor of what the church of Jesus Christ is to be, and as I preached that verse back in January, I was conscious that it expresses three key things:

- First, the togetherness of the people of God – that is, we’re called to be a people, a nation. Although we are each individually called to belong to Jesus and follow him as disciples, we belong together. And that togetherness is both an awesome privilege as well as an immense challenge.
- Second, the uniqueness of the people of God – that is, we’re chosen, royal, holy, God’s special possession. The church of Jesus Christ is no normal organisation. It’s not a private members club or a subscription service. We’re called, set apart from this world for our Saviour. We’re a distinct people.
- Third, the mission of the people of God – that is, to declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light. To make known to those around us the supreme greatness and glory of our Saviour God, in order that many others will themselves come to trust in him.

And the reason I chose that verse as our key text for the year was because, right at the outset of my ministry here in Flitwick, I wanted us to be clear that vision is important! It’s vital that we know what the nature and purpose of the church is, and how we express that as a local church. Vision is vital!

I had been very open with the elders last year, during the interview process, that I believe that vision is hugely important for the church. Not in any sense wanting us to become like a business or secular organisation, but because God has a vision for his church.

1 Peter 2:9 is one verse in the Bible that expresses that vision. There are others. The Great Commission at the end of Matthew’s gospel is a vision statement. Jesus says to his disciples: ‘therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.’

In Acts 1, shortly before returning to heaven, Jesus says these words to his disciples: ‘you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’

Our Lord Jesus has a vision for his church, and so it is not from a secular mindset that we've gathered this evening to talk about vision – not a secular mindset but a spiritual one.

Obviously verses such as those I've just referred to express Jesus' vision for his church across the world, through the ages. And so, we need to have those kind of verses front and centre in our minds when we talk about vision in the context of the local church. Our vision must be driven by Jesus' vision for the church.

And so, I had been very open with the elders that we would need to talk vision openly, frankly, and constructively in order to ensure that this local church grows into the church God wants us to be.

Little did any of know, however, how soon we'd be talking vision. Covid-19 provided us with a unique moment in our history. Full of immense challenges for all of us – uncertainties, fears, issues to be addressed. For me personally, the challenge of pastoring a church I barely knew, preaching to a camera instead of a congregation, and now more recently, the challenges associated with reopening the church.

But as well as plenty of challenges, Covid presented us with massive opportunities. The opportunity to serve the local community in practical ways through food packages and prescription collections and so on was thrust into our lap. But as elders we were also very conscious that the lockdown gave us an opportunity to step back and reflect, and review.

That's an opportunity that we seldom receive in the busyness of church life. But with everything grounding to a halt, we had this wonderful opportunity to review and seek the Lord together. And so, one of the things we did quite early on during lockdown was invite all the ministry leaders in the life of the church to review their own ministries – looking at what has been positive over the last year, and what opportunities there are for development and strengthening in the future.

But we weren't just asking others those questions. As elders, we were doing the exact same thing – spending some considerable time talking, thinking, and praying together over the church's life and ministry and vision.

And from that God-given opportunity, those hours of prayer and seeking the Lord, as well as the feedback from other ministry leaders, we developed a renewed vision for the future of this local church.

We believe that it is consistent with, and driven by, the vision Jesus himself announces for the church that bears his name. But more specifically, it expresses what we as elders believe Jesus is calling us to be – the kind of church that he wants us to be at this moment in time in this place.

Our desire is to cast a vision that is clear and simple, which expresses the kind of church we are. And yet there's more to it than that. A vision needs to be compelling and aspirational. A vision, in one sense, is something that will never fully be achieved until Jesus returns. So within our renewed vision there is scope for ongoing growth and development as we seek to follow and serve the Lord together. And as we'll see, already, this renewed vision has been leading us to some significant plans for the future that we'd like to lay before you this

evening. Because that's what vision does – it doesn't just reflect the status quo, but challenges us and drives us forward in the name of Jesus to glorify the one who has called us out of darkness and into his wonderful light.

A RENEWED VISION

So...what is our renewed vision for this local church? As elders, we're delighted to share it with you. We believe that this is what God is calling us to be:

A SPIRIT-FILLED COMMUNITY MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS TO THE GLORY OF GOD

We believe that sentence expresses both who we are and what we desire this church to be. It's a deeply biblical vision, and to that end our intention is that early next year, I will preach through each component of the vision statement.

- **Spirit-filled...** – our total and ongoing dependence on the Lord to be the people He has called us to be and to obey the greatest commandment and play our small part in the great commission (Acts 1:8); we are filled with the Spirit, but we need to be continually filled with the Spirit, it's an ongoing thing and it's as the Holy Spirit fills us and works in and through us that the world is changed.
- **...community...** – our core identity (1 Peter 2:9), this year's key text, will remain focal in our renewed vision; at our heart we're a community, a redeemed people together, a new nation for God's glory – ultimately representative of God's eternal kingdom here on earth.
- **...making disciples of Jesus...** – our core purpose expressing our missional goal (Matthew 28:18-20, John 20:21); this is at its very heart what the church is to be: a disciple-making community. That's the ultimate aim behind 1 Peter 2:9, of course – declaring God's praise so that those still in darkness might come into his wonderful light.
- **...to the glory of God** – our overwhelming desire for God to be glorified as sinners come to follow Jesus (Philippians 2:10-11). God is most glorified when people come to saving faith in Jesus – the Bible tells us that that is the cause of rejoicing in heaven. Could there be a greater aim, a greater vision than that?

But that vision statement in isolation doesn't fully express our understanding of what the church should look like – it explains what we want to be, but not precisely how we see that expressed. And so this renewed vision is accompanied by four core values that will enable us to fulfil that disciple-making vision.

FOUR CORE VALUES

- **A loving community** – our calling to follow the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-40; Deuteronomy 6:4-5) to love our Lord Jesus as our supreme delight, and worship him and glorify him as such; and to love our neighbours because we love Jesus.
- **A learning community** – our calling to grow in Christlikeness and bear fruit as we walk with him (Philippians 3:10-11; Colossians 1:10)
- **A serving community** – we are saved to serve and in doing so follow our Master (Mark 10:45)
- **A witnessing community** – our fundamental calling to bear witness to our Saviour in life, word and deed so that the gospel goes to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20)

These principles work in cycle, and so as we live them out, we will see disciples of Jesus made who themselves will love, learn, serve and witness with us.



LIVING THE VISION

A vision is only useful, or powerful, if it is a lived-out experience. For this reason, we will embark on a preaching series through our vision and core values next year.

Further development through 2021 and beyond will require us to live out our vision through every group/ministry in the life of the church and review against our core values.

It's hugely important that our vision is a frame of reference to measure & review ministries – every ministry should be aimed towards achieving the vision, contributing to one or more of the core values.

A compelling vision therefore becomes a key tool in helping ministry leaders lead, and review, and develop their own ministries and that of others in their teams.

SO, WHAT IS NEXT...?

There are two significant outworkings' of this renewed vision that we believe we need to embark upon with real urgency. If we truly want to be a disciple-making community, reaching Flitwick and beyond for Christ, these two areas are of vital importance. I'm going to very briefly outline what those two areas are, and then Bob and Ian are going to talk a little further about each of them. Then if there are any questions for clarification, Kevin will field those at the end.

Over the next few weeks, we will also be holding a series of drop-ins, where you can come and interact with us over these matters and ask any questions you may have. Those are the opportunities to talk a bit further about more detail – this evening is very much the big picture, the headlines.

So, two key areas for development we aim to embark on in the very near future.

AN ASSISTANT PASTOR

Investing in people is the single biggest disciple-making ministry the church can undertake, which is why this is the first area we need to address.

As you know, Bob will be retiring at the end of this year. I want to repeat my thanks to him for the way he's welcomed me into the ministry team here, and for the way he's graciously and humbly handed over the baton. Working in partnership together has been a great privilege.

Bob's retirement presents both a need and an opportunity for us as we go into 2021.

- a *need* to supplement our paid staff team, to work alongside Amanda and myself;
- a *great opportunity* to be involved in the raising up and training of future leaders within God's growing kingdom here on earth.

The elders have spent time together praying and discerning the Lord's leading. We have considered a range of possible options, and have concluded that, for this time in the life of FBC, an Assistant Pastor would be the right appointment, and Bob will outline how we see that role unfolding in just a moment.

DEVELOPING OUR BUILDINGS

The other significant, and urgent, area for attention is our premises. If we want to reach our town, and its surrounding area, with the good news of Jesus Christ so that many others become disciples who themselves in turn make disciples, we need to create the space for such a growing community. In fact, we need to develop our present space just to house our current congregation, let alone more!

So, if we genuinely want to reach our town for Christ, we urgently need to develop our premises to accommodate a growing community of disciples, and in a moment Ian is going to outline the plans we've been working on in this regard.

CALLING AN ASSISTANT PASTOR

Briefing notes by Bob Cain

Ephesians 4:11-13 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

WHY?

- The Lord Jesus loves the church and has showered us with gifts to build us up in loving, learning, serving, and witnessing of his grace
- The gifts of those He has called and set aside for full-time ministry as pastor / teachers is key to making us into the people of God Jesus died and rose again for.
- When Jesus was preparing His servants for His world-wide mission we read in **Luke 10:1** "After this he appointed seventy two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go"
- Since the 1990's the Lord has been pleased to teach us the value and enjoy the blessings of having at least two full-time pastors on the staff of the church.
- It has been a huge blessing to me and to Shirl to be called to work on the pastoral staff team firstly alongside Michael Teutsch, and then in 2020 alongside Tim. One of my goals for this year was to "pass the baton" onto Tim before I step down as one of your pastors.
- I did not fully appreciate the pressures of working as the sole pastor until Michael left, and so for the care and support of Tim and Amanda, and the growth of the church and the reaching of the lost, we the elders are convinced it is wise, and in the will of God to seek him to lead us to appoint an Assistant Pastor to join the staff team here.

WHO?

- “The man of God’s choice” is the right answer. And it is our view at this time that the man would have some ministry experience under his belt and may have completed or be close to completing some formal theological training at seminary.
- We believe this is a wise direction to seek such a man, who will be able and ready, when he joins us, to work alongside Tim and so strengthen our disciple making vision.

HOW?

- We have an established process that we refined as we were seeking the Lord during calling Tim to join us, so we will be following that process again, which in brief is:
 - **Define the role and job-description:** Tim is working on this. We will of course share this with the church family in due course.
 - **Advertise the position:** via networking Christian press and FIEC website
 - **Process the applications as they come in:** elders select candidates for interview
 - **1st round of interviews:** Elder led interviews to select candidates to preach
 - **2nd round of interviews:** one man at a time, following a positive experience of their visit
 - **Invite one man at a time** to spend the weekend with us and his family if he has one.
 - **Call a members’ meeting** to formally invite him to join the team.
- The salary range we are considering is between £20 to £25K

WHEN?

- We plan to launch the process following our AGM on 7th October

DEVELOPING OUR BUILDINGS

Briefing notes by Ian Adams

INTRODUCTION

- We are the church, the Lord’s people, not the building!
- But the building serves an important purpose in our worship and the service of our Lord.
- Our previous leaders and members wisely enabled us to change and increase our footprint by utilising land from the manse garden and by building the wall between the auditorium and the hall in such a way that it could be removed without the need for major structural renovation
- We own the buildings but the trust deed which applies to our buildings (not the general running of the church) requires us to get the agreement of the Baptist Union should we sell or purchase any new land in connection with the church building or the manse.
- We have surveyed and consulted with ministry leads

- We have £57668 in the Gospel Fund. The terms of use for this fund agreed by the church include church improvement work where it is for the purpose of spreading the gospel. The officers believe this can include the changes that are envisaged.
- There has been much prayer and discussion amongst the officers. We want to be in tune with the Lord's will so we must all now take time to pray further and be prepared to listen to what the Lord is telling us.

CHANGE ENVISAGED

- STAGE 1 knock down the wall between the lounge and auditorium, rotate the staging and seating by 90 degrees to increase the seating capacity to 224 and to improve the layout of the auditorium.
- Purchase at least 200 stackable chairs for the auditorium
- Purchase sectional staging units with total area 12m x 2m
- Review existing and purchase new audio and visual equipment with a mobile desk
- Develop and utilise the existing cloakroom for stackable chairs storage
- Develop and utilise the existing vestibule to create a small office and new cloakroom area
- Build stud walls for new classrooms (probably 2) in existing sports hall
- Change and improve heating in auditorium and sports hall classrooms
- Purchase metal shed for siting by the garages for storage - predominantly Kings Tots equipment
- STAGE 2 convert the double garage into a classroom
- Change the access point into the church property/car park
- Various internal aesthetic improvements to the building
- STAGE 3 Extend the footprint of our property by extending the garages and creating a larger area connected to the church OR by purchasing some adjoining land and creating a single storey extension to replace the existing hall and provide further kitchen and toilet facilities.

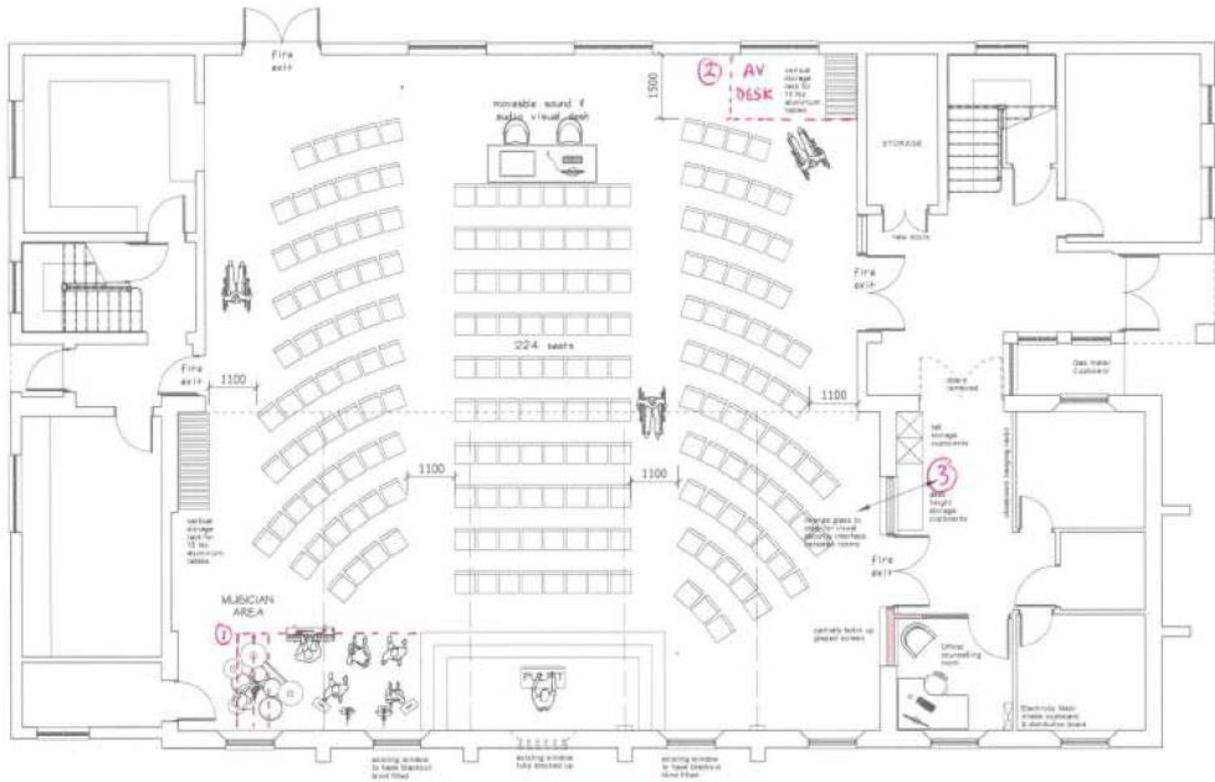
MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS

- Stages 1 and 2 will increase our auditorium but will have an impact on our current use of the sports hall and will require the weekly movement of chairs
- Stages 1 and 2 are likely to cost in the region of £100,000 and the Gospel Fund currently stands at £57,668 so there is a shortfall
- Stages 1 and 2 set out what we consider to be the sequence of proposed change, but it is considered that both stages are necessary and could be commenced in 2021.
- Stage 3 is considered desirable but is subject to us understanding: the benefits and essential requirements; that greater financial commitment has an impact on our giving; planning permission will be needed; the possibility of us acquiring further land and that we will need the agreement of the Baptist Union should this happen

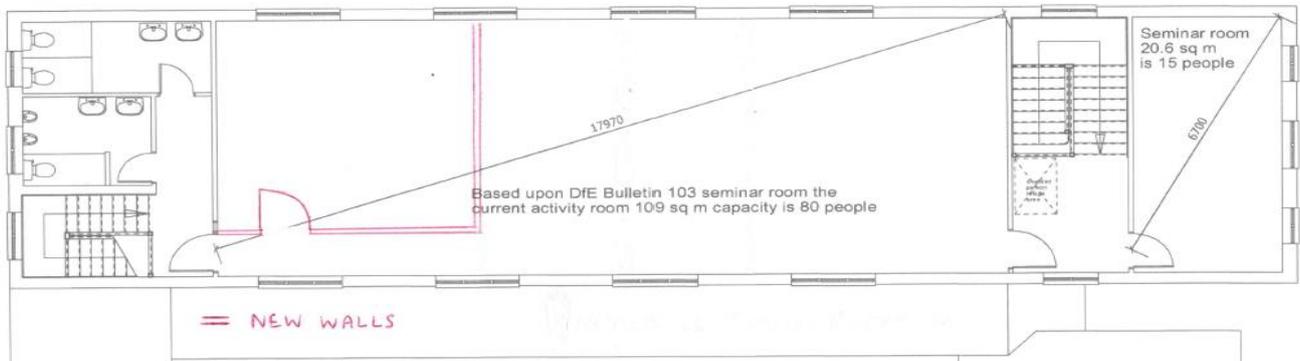
NEXT STEP

- At the Annual General Meeting in October we will be asking the church to formally support Stages 1 and 2 so we can embark on raising the funds and commencing the project.

FLOORPLANS



Ground floor



Sports hall