



## **OUR CHURCH BUILDING AND THE FUTURE**

# KINGDOM CHURCH

## Values and Priorities in a Time of Change

Jesus put it like this.

*'Whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, my mother'* Mark 3. 31 – 35



Everybody was encouraged to pray over the first draft, to reflect and to input before this final version was approved by our PCC on January 11th 2009.

Even so, I am sure that what you read here is not 'the last word'. We look beyond lists and summaries of all kinds, to God and to his Christ who is always bigger and more wonderful than all our imagining.

There is this sense that God is doing something new among us, that the visions and pictures that some of us have had of the life of God - light - power - flowing out from the church and beginning to transform the neighbourhood, point to a new sort of church, a new wineskin for the new wine.<sup>1</sup> These values are about giving Jesus space to do this new work among us.

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<sup>1</sup> However, it is good to remember that we are not journeying alone! Many 'fresh expressions' of church, including Cell Church display a similar vision. Matt has also been encouraged greatly by reading John Burke's book 'No Perfect People Allowed' which reflects the experience of Gateway Church in Austin, Texas. And above all we are continuing to benefit greatly from the input of Rapha and our friends at Christ Church, Deal.

# VALUES

**What sort of church community is God shaping us into?**

**What sort of values need to shape and guide our life together in these times of challenge and change?**

- **Jesus calls us all to travel with him on a Journey** Being a Christian means giving Jesus permission daily to speak into our lives, and help us to gain insights and make changes. As we learn to listen to him and obey him, so he helps us to let go of our old life of sin and pain and slavery, and embrace fully our new life with him in the Spirit and in joyful obedience to the Father.
  - So we teach that being a disciple means being willing to journey with Jesus from the old life to the new, and that this is the journey of a lifetime.
  
- **A 'Come as you are' Church** Jesus wants to meet us as we are, not as we think we ought to be!
  - So, we try to be a *real* community where people feel free to find themselves and be themselves, learning to live without masks.
  
- **Prayer, not Pressure**<sup>2</sup> We trust in the inner work and gifts of the Holy Spirit through prayer, rather than institutional pressure.
  - In all we do we give a high priority to prayer, waiting on God, learning to watch and listen.
  - In the same spirit, we pray for grace and wisdom to handle differences, disagreements and conflicts in healthy ways so that we all learn and grow through them.
  
- **The Bible is God's Book** We teach that the Bible is unique among all books because it has been given to us for our guidance and nourishment by God himself. It contains the saving truths of life itself.
  - so, we aim to be a church submitted to God as he shows himself in Scripture.
  - however, in keeping with the values above we do not impose 'orthodoxy', but aim to open the Bible to all, giving each other space to question and doubt, and to find the truth for ourselves.
  
- **Jesus' Death and Resurrection changes Everything** At the heart of the good news is the fact of Christ's death that brings us life. It is his death that sets us free from sin, slavery, the devil and the fear of death. It is his death that is our passover, the gateway to the kingdom.
  - so, we proclaim his death 'until he comes', by sharing in the Holy Communion, and through our evangelism and teaching.
  - as we think about his death and resurrection we are able to see our life, past, present and future in a different light.

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<sup>2</sup> What is written here must not be taken as a denial of the responsibility of the leadership to safeguard the flock. We have a responsibility to God and in law to ensure that the church corporately stays faithful to Christ and his teachings and that the church is a safe place for children, for the vulnerable and for everybody.

- **Putting His Kingdom first** Jesus taught that if we put God's kingdom and his righteousness first, all our other needs will be met. This means desiring nothing less than the reign of God on earth, his kingdom of righteousness, justice and peace, foretold by the prophets, and seen supremely in the words and deeds of Christ who is and is to come.
  - so, we aim to be a community that always looks outside and beyond itself, praying and working for Christ's kingdom among our neighbours, in the city, nation and world, as part of Christ's worldwide family.
  - we accept that following Christ will be costly and will often take us outside our comfort zones
  - we follow Jesus in looking out especially for people in need, in trouble and on the margins of society, seeking to empower the powerless and to love our enemies.
  - we encourage each other to look to build Christ's kingdom in our work, leisure activities and in all that we do.
  
- **Delight in the Differences** We are all gloriously different, at different stages of our journey, with different natural strengths and weaknesses, learning styles, giftings, experiences etc. These manifest in endless variety across sexes, generations and cultures.
  - loving as Jesus commanded means learning to understand, love and value what is distinctive in ourselves and in others. In this atmosphere of love and encouragement, the gifts of the Spirit will blossom.
  - so, we encourage people to join some kind of cell or small group activity as part of their personal journey.
  - our community life needs to reflect this richness, allowing for varied expressions of church within one community. The church is impoverished if it allows itself to become a mono-culture.
  
- **One Family in Christ** Yet we are all one family! Jesus wants to bring all this rich variety together and make something new out of it.
  - we look for appropriate ways to express the unifying work of Jesus among us, on Sundays, festivals and in other ways.
  - we understand that Jesus' healing work is communal as well as individual. Learning to belong is a big part of our healing.
  - we work to make our pastoral structure, our administration and communications as effective as possible.

# PRIORITIES

Here are some *priorities* we have agreed to aim for in the next couple of years.

- A. **Studying the neighbourhood and putting together a gospel strategy** We need to study the rich cultural mix of people living in the parish. We already know that it is a mostly young neighbourhood, with a large proportion living alone. We need a better understanding of modern life and how people are changing. What are people hungry for? What have we got to offer? How do we get out and among the different groups? What barriers get in the way, and how can they be removed? We need a comprehensive gospel strategy, not just relying on Alpha, that includes how we use the building, and we need to pray to God to fill us constantly full of his love for our neighbour.
- B. **'In my Father's house are many rooms'** The 'values' above point to a much richer, more flexible and varied pattern of church family life than is traditionally associated with churches.
- A remodelled building needs to reflect and provide for this rich vision, as well as the gospel strategy. Church becomes a big family house, lots of different activities, but with places for retreat and prayer.
  - 'Sunday' needs to reflect this richness too.
- C. **Children, Youth and Family Life.** We affirm in the 'values' that the church needs to be a home for all kinds of people and all the generations. However, nobody can deny that childhood and family life have been a particular target of assault in our society. Jesus seemed to anticipate that children, in particular, would remain particularly vulnerable. Secondly, Jesus tells us that recovering our own childlikeness is part of our journey, and that therefore we should welcome children and seek to learn from them!
- So we need to ask how we can best serve and minister to children and their families, and how we can bring them to the centre of church life.
  - We are networking more and more with other churches and agencies to see how we can best reach and serve the youth of Southsea.
- D. **Our discipleship journey** We continue to look at how we disciple one another, and how St. Simon's can be a healthy and health bestowing community. We work to make 'Rapha' more accessible to more people.
- E. **Leader Training** Having suitably gifted cell / small group and activity leaders who are journeying themselves and have taken on board these values is really important for the long term health of the church. Rapha continues to be enormously helpful both in providing tools and encouragement for our personal journeys and in giving us a new vision of community. We need to gather up what we are learning both from the experience of Cell church and from Rapha into a leadership training programme.