



Christ Church Huntingdon Annual Church Meeting

Pastor's Report Sunday 9th February 2020

As we look back with thanks over the last year and look forward prayerfully into 2020 and beyond, I'd like to start with this verse from the Bible. *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" 1 Thess 5:11.* It's a great verse, and a great theme to which we will return shortly. I'm going to divide this report into two parts, **looking back** and **looking ahead**.

But first here's a **brief reminder** of who we are and what we stand for as a church. It's all wrapped up in our name: CHRIST CHURCH HUNTINGDON. This will be revision for many of you (and it's all on our welcome video and on our website), but it's helpful to return to again and again to recalibrate our sights. The vision of our church is *"to see the wonderful good news of Jesus' rescue, which transforms, unites and equips a community, prayerfully shared with all in the Huntingdon area"*.

- **CHRIST** (loving Jesus) – We want to be a Church with Jesus Christ at the centre of all we do. That means that we have two key commitments to the **Bible**, and to **prayer**. As we saw in our recent series we believe God speaks to us in his Word the Bible, and as we are going to see very often in Nehemiah, we are to speak to him in prayer.
- **CHURCH** (loving One another) – We want to be a church that is deeply committed to Christian sisterly, brotherly love- bearing one another's burdens, praying for one another. Therefore, we are committed to **truth** and **love** and our 6 small groups are a great place for this to happen.
- **HUNTINGDON** (loving Huntingdon) – Along with the other churches in Huntingdon we want to be a blessing to our neighbours. We are here for others. We are here to help the 98% of Huntingdon who don't know Jesus understand who he is- God's promised Saviour & King the one who loves us and has died to forgive us. So we have a commitment to our neighbours in **word** and **deed**.

So how have we been seeking to do that over the last year?

First LOOKING BACK

Now I hope everyone has received a copy of this pink document, called "CCH's Church Council Report Jan 2019-20"¹. That is the *formal report* on what has been going on over the last year, but for a more *informal report*, here's a little **slideshow** for you of things that happened since our first ACM last March: *Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter!* Most of them seem to revolve around food!

Second LOOKING AHEAD

As we now look to 2020, what will be our "2020 vision?!" Well it's to carry on doing what God has called us to do: obeying the Bible by Loving Jesus, Loving one another and Loving Huntingdon.

But can I sharpen that vision with a particular emphasis this year....*"Encouragement"*!

As a church, the Lord has blessed us, and we have grown in numbers....Here's a **diagram** I showed last year. We started with around 30 adults & children from St Andrew the Great in Cambridge. We were soon outnumbered by others who joined us from various different corners of the globe and from the local area. So in the last academic year on a Sunday we grew to around **50 adults & 20 children**. Though some have moved on, the Lord has brought others into our church, and we are now getting more like **60 adults & 26 kids** on a Sunday. Now numbers aren't everything- we pray that we will grow in depth as well as in numbers, but they can be a helpful indicator.

¹ https://christchurchhuntingdon.co.uk/Articles/563430/Annual_Church_Meeting.aspx

But here's a thing... Although our *numbers* have grown, the *work* has also grown, but the *numbers of workers* have not necessarily grown in the same proportion, and so there's a danger that our core of workers could get overheated. We haven't reached a critical temperature but we need to be careful!

People have been working very hard, every Sunday to make sure that the church is set up, that the children's groups are manned. There's a lot of work to make sure everything happens week by week- unloading cars, putting out bibles, making the coffee. On top of that we've added a couple of extra ministries- like FEED, the Men's group and the Thongsley Funday. Work on our finances, mission support and safeguarding has increased.

I want to register my thanks to everyone for all that you are doing. So much goes on week in week out both visibly and invisibly behind the scenes. I praise God for each one of you.

But we just need to be a little careful... One of the dangers of a small church plant is that we try to do more than we can, and to do it in our own strength, and the danger is burnout or overheating. That's particularly a danger when we forget the wonderful Servant King who we serve.

Let me represent it diagrammatically with concentric rings...

1. **Christ** is the Lord, and saviour, and life giver of our church. Without him we are nothing. Christianity is Christ! We have to remain in the Vine. Now our church has different layers.
2. Any church inevitably has a **core**. These are some of the chief worker bees. In some churches 20% of the church do 80% of the work. To borrow one analogy, it can be like a football stadium with just a few players and too many spectators. Wonderfully our church is not that- there's a wonderful team work of active players. Nevertheless, many people are working very hard, and we want to be careful to avoid burnout.
3. Next we have our **congregation**. This may be folk who come on a Sunday from time to time, and hopefully now have a job to do, but aren't at the core of things. Some folk are newish, and may not feel they fully belong. But we desperately want them to feel part of things- because Christ Church is for all.
4. Then we have our **crowd**. These folk may never come to church, but we are engaged in relationship with them, perhaps at Thongsley or at the school gate, or through friendship in the football group, helping with the garden here at St Peters or joining a local sports team.
5. The crowd are a small part of the wider **community**- the whole of Huntingdon that we are praying to reach long term with other gospel churches.

We want to help everyone to come closer to Christ- closer to the centre. If the core gets too hot then there's a danger of discouragement or burnout. We need to watch that. Perhaps through friendship and discipleship we can build up the core from the fringe or congregation, so that we are all the core, working together to do the work of **reaching** the crowd and the community.

Can I suggest one specific way to help in this. **ENCOURAGEMENT**. The Bible is packed full of verses about encouraging one another, here are just a few:

- **God encourages:** *You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry.* (**Psalm** 10:17)
- **The Scripture encourages:** *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.* (**Romans** 15:4)
- **Friends encourage:** *Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers.* (**Acts** 15:32)
- In fact we are to **encourage one another daily!** *But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today', so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.* (**Heb** 3:13)

So let's be Barnabases (his name means Son of Encouragement – Acts 4:36). It will enable us to refresh and support one another. Here are three practical ways you can encourage one another.

1) With friendship. We are a real mix of people from different countries, and cultures and demographics. Can I say that if you don't feel slightly uncomfortable when you come to church, then there's a danger that we have become a place that is too comfortable for one kind of person. How can you reach out across the differences to build friendship with people perhaps who are very different from you? That would be such an encouragement to them, and perhaps it would draw some from the fringe to the core. I love hearing of how people are inviting one another out for a coffee, or over to one another's house for a meal.

2) With practical action. By taking on a role, you can spread the load with others. Join a team, like welcoming, refreshments, youth work or admin. We will all be given different gifts, and we can all help build the walls to use an analogy from Nehemiah. Let me or one of the other wardens/elders (David, Johnny, Jon) know if you'd like to talk through how you can serve. We thought about this with our "**nuts and bolts**" session, and I have info available from that if you missed it.

3) With Bible truth. Can you refresh the hearts of the saints with a bible verse on a text message, or with a bit of one to one care and encouragement over a cup of tea? Maybe someone is weary and needs a reminder that we are all serving Jesus. Maybe you can pluck up the courage to ask someone how they are doing and what you can pray for them?

That verse we started with. You are **already** encouraging and building one another up! Keep doing it! With your friendship, in practical ways and with Bible truth. This will energise us inwardly with the good news, and enable us to keep looking outwardly: to taking the good news to the **crowd** and the **community**.

So last year we looked at "United Gospel Entrepreneurship", and we have exciting plans this year, with the holiday club and other initiatives to keep doing that, but perhaps we can add another E to it. **UGEE!** United Gospel **Encouragement and** Entrepreneurship!

Later on we'll have time for questions (do think some up), but for now, let me pray and then I'll hand over to Nathan to talk about our finances.