



*Experiencing and expressing the presence  
and love of God at the heart of the community.*

# *Casting the Vision*

Acts 2 v42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

November 2007

# St Johns Church Purpose Statement

***Celebrating*** together.....  
.... the presence of God

***Welcoming*** all.....  
.... into the family of God

***Teaching*** believers .....  
....to follow the way of God

***Reaching*** out to everyone .....  
....with the love of God

***Serving*** Him and each other .....  
....With the gifts of God

# *Casting the Vision*

It all started when we realised that to do nothing with the Church Hall was not an option!

To be honest, the last thing I wanted was a building project.

As time has gone by we have wrestled with not only whether to re-build or not, but more importantly what are we re-building for? And as we have talked and prayed and dreamed and planned with the wise leaders and good people of St John's, a vision has evolved which I believe to be a God-idea, and which has inspired faith in me (even if it's a bit wobbly at times!).

As a Gospel-focused and mission-shaped Church who seek to see people's lives transformed by the love of God, each one of us has the opportunity of building the future for the work of the Kingdom in our community and town.

The fact is that the facilities of our church site are struggling to cope with the demands made of it. With the existing growth in the church, and with future potential, we need to enlarge our capacity by developing our site for generations to come... for a variety of uses, ranging from teaching and training to fellowship and outreach. In short, our vision is to have a church site that releases and enables our mission for God's Kingdom to extend here in our community and beyond.

Much of our vision has been driven by the needs and opportunities of the young and old, the lonely and the needy, the active and the not so active, believers and enquirers, to experience and enjoy the message, ministry and fellowship of Jesus.

Currently, growth in midweek activities and the numbers of outside users is limited by existing facilities. We need more space especially for pre-school, children and youth work. A growing church also requires greater infrastructure and administrative support, particularly office space, which at present is decidedly inadequate. And not least Health & Safety and Disability Access legislation applies in full measure to a church like St John's. Furthermore, it is of great significance that we have large numbers of people coming onto our site on a daily basis week by week.

Consequently we need to be a welcoming, accessible site to meet and greet people, engage with people, hold on to people, help, and above all minister God's love to people.

The time has come therefore (and I say this nervously and somewhat fearfully yet with confidence in the faithfulness of God) to step out in faith into what the Lord is leading us to build for the future. We need to transform the site...

***for the community to meet the Kingdom,  
for the Church to meet as family,  
for generations to come.***

*With man this is impossible, but not with God.  
With God all things are possible.*

Perhaps it will be good to stop here and breathe out a prayer to the Lord asking Him to speak to you as you read the next few pages. They are a summary of my sermon given on Sunday 2nd September. I hope they inspire and challenge us all, as the essence of the message has inspired and challenged me, and to move us from fear to faith.

In the Father's love,

Bob

### **Isaiah 41 v10**

So do not fear, for I am with you;  
Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my  
Righteous right hand.

## **FROM FEAR TO FAITH - Matthew 14v13-33**

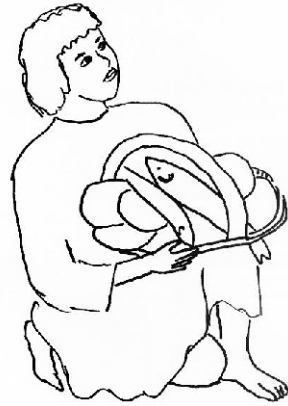
In essence the Church Redevelopment Project is about **people** - lost people matter to God - and **faith**... a faith-lift for the people of God.

During the weeks of prayer and discernment for the Church Redevelopment Project the Lord spoke to us through the story of Jesus feeding the 5000. So I'd like to focus on this story with the prayer that it will raise our faith in the power of God.

## 1. Jesus cared about people

*"He had compassion on them and healed them."* (v14)

Hardly new news I know, but the point I want to bring out is that Jesus lived what He preached. He embodied it, and so must we. Do we love people? Do we care about them enough to show them how much we care? Jesus' care showed in meeting people's needs so that their "hunger" was satisfied. As a church we are about seeking to bring people to



Jesus for Him to meet them at their point of need. And a part of doing that is by creating community - something much needed in our society today.

## 2. Jesus challenged defeatist attitudes v15,16

The disciples were defeated by the needs of the crowd. "Send them away!" they said, suggesting the disciples couldn't cope. Sadly, that is often the attitude presented by the church today. We can't cope. We have nothing to give the people. So effectively we send them away. It's as though we don't have the resources to help them. And there is a sense in which this is true. When we rely on ourselves and become self-sufficient we will fail. We need to recognise the source of power. In our own strength we will die, but empowered by God's Spirit through a life-giving relationship with Jesus, we will not only live but we will overflow with life. Our natural tendency is to look in at ourselves instead of first looking to God. We need to experience the biblical truth of "seeking first the Kingdom of God" every day.

## 3. Jesus received the gift of the lad v17

To borrow from the Gospel of John's account of the story, a small lad gives his lunch to Jesus, comprising five loaves and two fish. The boy gave willingly and the boy gave his all to Jesus. And Jesus gladly received what he gave and made it work a miracle. Amazingly, He will do the same with us. Are you willing to give yourself to Jesus, because He wants to use you - and collectively He wants to use us - to work a miracle.

#### **4. Jesus invited the disciples help** v18,19

Jesus received the humble and sacrificial offering, gave thanks, broke it, and then gave it to the disciples to distribute. And He will do the same today. He will receive our offerings and sacrifices. I don't know how, but I'm sure something caught on because that small boy gave what he could to Jesus. Who is to say what God is going to do with us and our offerings if we give them to Him in the life of our church? We can all be involved in Kingdom work. In Jesus' hands that offering became a catalyst for a miracle; not only were 5000 men plus women and children fed, but there were twelve basketfuls left over (v20,21). The disciples were part of that miracle. Jesus invites us to be a part of the miracle He wants to do here in St John's.

What's intriguing is that in the wisdom of God, He causes the next incident that follows and He inspires Matthew to record it. It's as though Jesus has taught them an object lesson in faith and now goes on to invite them to exercise that faith by calling Peter to walk on water.



**If you want to walk on water  
you've got to get out of the boat.**

For Peter the opportunity was compelling and the challenge was faith-stretching.

Similarly, the opportunity to develop our site for Kingdom work for generations to come is compelling and the challenge of the cost is faith-stretching.

Note Peter's experience, because in the midst of this incredible event God was visiting Peter... Having heard the call of Jesus to come to Him on the water, Peter checked out that it was definitely the Lord.

We have spent more than two years

discerning that the Church Development Project is the Lord's will and fits the vision He has given us i.e. it's a God-idea, not only a good idea.

Then came the crunch - if Peter wanted to walk on water, he had to get out

of the boat. It was a daunting challenge - just as it is for us. I guess £1.2m is more than we can imagine. But actually, if it wasn't, I would be concerned that it would simply be about a human idea and not God's plan.

God's work done  
In God's way will  
Never lack God's  
resources.

Hudson Taylor

It's all too easy for us to be focused on one thing... the money! But if you look at the 'why' and the 'what' of the vision then we'll get to the 'how' as each of us gets out of the boat. There's more to life than sitting comfortably in our boats! We're a people with a purpose. Sure, we are nervous - just like Peter - but remember fear will never go away because each time we want to grow in faith it will involve stepping out into new territory.

Jesus is looking today for people who will get out of their boats and confront their fears with faith. Peter risked it and encountered Jesus. The main reason he got out of the boat is because he wanted to be where Jesus was - the place of ultimate safety.

May God grant each one of us the faith to step out in obedience to His purpose, to trust in His provision, and experience His presence as we build the future He has prepared for us to accomplish.



## Faith

(Mark 11 v 23-24)

“I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in Prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.



**God can do anything,  
you know - far more than you could ever  
imagine or guess or request in your wildest  
dreams! He does it not by pushing us around  
but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and  
gently within us.**

Ephesians 3 v20

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