

newsletter

By Chris Simmons

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Hi all

I have a few things I want to say. I want to give some feedback on church, talk about some plans, reflect a little and encourage us. I couldn't do that in a page!

Here are some words from Ecclesiastes part of the wisdom literature from the Old Testament:

A Time for Everything

1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,

3 a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,

4 a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,

5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain,

6 a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,

7 a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,

The author is describing life as we know it. As a pastor I know these seasons of life meet us all at differing places in our church. It's very much as Charles Dickens describes in the tale of two cities, "it was the best of times it was the worst of times!" For some it's a time of rejoicing with a new job, a new baby, a celebration of some kind. To others the season is one of difficulty (perhaps in the present time finances), bereavement, sickness, unmet goals, possibly a struggling marriage.

In all of life's circumstances we

can follow the example of the greatest human being who has ever lived. The absolute certainty of a God who doesn't just emanate love but who is love. A God who has shown us the way, and beckons us forward not towards a life of mediocrity, but an adventure of faith. There is nothing in this uncertain life that wasn't overcome for us on that cross. Everything was and is paid for. As the Hebrew writer tells us it was a "once and for all sacrifice". We have a man who rejoiced in suffering, one who was betrayed, rejected and despised of men. In all of these things He saw only the redemptive purposes of God, and went forward with joy, knowing the wickedness of men was to be used to bring about the ultimate victory of God. Victory over satan, sin and death. We are the inheritors of this victory, and now called into His service, equipped and empowered by His Spirit.

So whatever season you are in right now, be encouraged that God's purposes are good and that "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus".

In thinking about seasons there are also seasons in church life, and I want to update you with some of my thoughts and enlist your prayer support and feedback.

LOOKING FOR A NEW VENUE:

It's been on my heart for sometime, and I mentioned several times last year that we would like to find a more permanent home for us as a

church community. I now want to answer several questions in regard to why I think this is a good thing, how it will benefit us as a church and our wider community, and how we can achieve this goal. A building would of course open up many exciting areas of ministry and community denied us with renting and having to set up each week.

In looking towards a project like this I am deeply aware that the Kingdom of God is not about bricks and mortar. I am also profoundly aware of the absolute impossibility of achieving this goal without God's help! The kingdom of God is God's rulership and dominion over all He has made. This is most clearly demonstrated for me in the miracle of conversion. I never get tired of talking to new converts, and always now feel worried if I haven't given someone a new bible for a while! My friend Bob Harper calls it extending God's kingdom "one heart at a time" I like that.

A facility, a building then is a place to meet in and something that God can use for His glory in extending His Kingdom. People of course always take precedence and the building is there to serve them and our churches vision better. I believe it will be a huge blessing to us as a congregation and will enable us to better able fulfill our God given mission in Brighton and Hove and beyond. It is therefore something we can utilise and use, and will Godwilling help us grow both in numbers, effectiveness and community life.

OUR AIM

To purchase a building that will better enable us to serve our church community and the wider community of Brighton and Hove.

We would like it have: -

- An auditorium that will leave room for growth
- Better rooms for the
- children's ministry
- Church administration offices
- Rooms for community use such as a preschool
- Adequate parking
- Office Suites that we can rent to local businesses

So what I want to do now is answer some questions we might have and enlist your prayer support and feedback. I've tried to think of some of the questions you might have. At this moment I don't want to talk about money at all, if its Gods will and He has this for us money wont be the main issue. So I am trusting that the question and answer format will help you understand my reasoning and enable you to pray more effectively.

James talks about "you do not have, because you do not ask God". I want us to ask!

So here are some questions:

Is this a short term goal for us as a church or a long term goal?

A: I don't know! I would like to think we can achieve this in the next five years, but we need to find a suitable building first and this is difficult in a city like Brighton and Hove where space is "at a premium". I am however wanting to be prepared as a church should a suitable building be found. There may be a possibility of purchasing the building we are in at the moment and switching places with Juice FM. In other words we would get downstairs. This isn't what we ultimately need, but it might be a possible stepping stone. Pray for wisdom.

Why own a building? Isn't BHASVIC working for us?

A: Yes and no. BHASVIC has been a blessing to us as a church in enabling us to grow to the size we are now at. However the lack of availability of space during the week, the ability to do an evening service there, parking and children's ministry rooms are all hampering us in engaging with the type, scale and scope of ministry and mission I believe God desires. We are also unable to do the occasional extended morning service followed by lunch together.

What will the building look like?

A: We are praying for a 10,000 square foot building, somewhere between Boundary Road and Kemptown. We will need ample room for car parking, children's ministry, professional office suites, and an auditorium that will leave us room to grow.

Can we purchase a suitable building or will we need to build one?

A: We are looking at both with professional help from a commercial estate agent. As space is limited in Brighton and Hove it is more likely that we find a building and then have to "do it up".

Why not consider renting?

A: One of the problems with renting is the kind of lease agreement you have to sign to rent the building. Normally the rent can be quite high, with the need to maintain the building and refurbish it every five years. If you then compound the rent over the first ten years, these monies could easily have gone towards the purchase of a building with an ever decreasing debt. At the moment we are paying monies in rent to BHASVIC and the church offices of approximately £2,000 per month. These monies could be put towards the loan repayments from a bank.

Wouldn't the cost of a building be better spent on

the poor?

A: I believe that with a building we can better serve the poor rather than a one off gift. A building also gives us the opportunity of leaving behind a legacy for the next generation.

Do you think local businesses would want to rent offices from a church building?

A: This would really help us to manage the financial cost of a building. We already have member of our own church interested in moving his accountancy practice to just such an office if we can find a building. There are a number of community groups whom are already interested.

What are the major obstacles that we practically can pray about?

A: The three obstacles we need to pray about are i) To find a suitable building and gain favour with the vendor, ii) To raise a sufficient deposit iii) to gain planning permission form the council.

All three may not be easy, and we need to put lots of effort into praying about them.

What about the credit crunch – doesn't that make this project impossible?

A: Actually the credit crises may help us. As funds become scarce and lending harder, providing we can raise a sufficient deposit, we should be able to borrow the monies we require. In addition the price of commercial real estate is falling, and most property developers are now completely out of the market.

So our new facilities could also allow:

Coffee Shop
Marriage Courses
After School Clubs
Storehouse
IT Training
Holiday Clubs
Childcare Provisions
Music Ministry
Breakfast Clubs
All Types of Events

Debt and Crisis Counseling Youth Clubs

All of these will require prayer. If you remember the story of Nehemiah, he was allowed by the king to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Despite this however he faced significant opposition from Sanballat who is a 'type of Satan' in the Old Testament. If we go forward with a project like this we shouldn't expect to be able to do it without opposition and a degree of sacrifice.

We have been praying for some time now at all of our prayer meetings. So please do join in prayer and let me know if you feel anything prophetically from God.

FUTURE PLANS

Week-end Away

This year we are again planning a week-end away. We want to make this as inclusive as possible so that as many people as possible from the church can attend. We have kept the cost as low as possible without compromising quality. Camping is optional and day visitors will be welcome. God willing it will be another time to spend time together having fun and worshipping God. So please do make this priority if you are able to attend. The ideal would be that the whole church community is able to come along.

Services

Our evening service has at last found a new venue that likes us! We will be regularly meeting each month for the rest of the year. So please pass the word around and bring your friends. The service is aimed at those on the outside of the church. Statistics still show that the majority of people who come to Christ do so at the invitation of friends to Christian services. We would like to eventually do a weekly evening service in the city. For this we need a venue

equipped with PA at a reasonable price. At the moment we can't find one.

Music

We are about to release our very first album "Dream with open eyes". We are hoping to have it fully mastered and pressed by Easter. The cost will be £12.00 and you can preorder by emailing the office.

New Staff Member

Nicola Chanamoto is now on staff a day a week and has taken over the running of the discipleship courses in the church. She is doing a great job.

Challenges

We need to continue to pray for answers to our often full car park and over stretched children's ministry on Sunday mornings. Wendy is working incredibly hard and doing a great job, but her time is limited as are the number of volunteers available. Our finances are stretched to the limit as we prepare to move back to a monthly evening service. The cost of each evening service is approximately £200, the same as our morning service.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR CHURCH

Becoming a more missional church

One of my heroes of faith is Martin Luther. A German Catholic priest and theologian who faced down the magisterium and curia of the whole Catholic church of his day. He rediscovered in the midst of superstitious medieval Christianity, that salvation from God is a gift given to human beings by faith and not works. It was a tremendous achievement and one for which he was to face the constant threat of death at the hands of the inquisition. Ultimately he was excommunicated from the church he loved dearly. If you

haven't listened to Rosie's testimony then do listen to it. (you can hear it on our website). She describes eloquently how she came to believe. Not through her own good graces, but through the grace of God given to her to allow her to believe. She is a perfect example of what Martin Luther understood all those years ago in coming to faith in Jesus.

So in 2005 I was at Trent Vineyard listening to David Parker a pastor from the USA speaking on the subject of preaching. He described the way he helps lead people to making a commitment to become followers of Jesus Christ. He requests people to bow their heads and raise their hands – something which is now part of our church. I was as is normal for me sitting at the back, and paying half attention as it was towards the end of his talk! (and Trent Vineyard have a bar that serves good beer).

I wasn't expecting God to speak to me, but He did, audibly enough for me to turn around and look for the person who had just spoken to me. It was very clear and very simple, but also a command - "DO THIS". Our first evening service at one of Brighton's clubs followed shortly afterwards. So with very little faith I tried it, more out of obedience than expectation. I was amazed not just that people responded but that Christ met them powerfully and changed their lives. So in that year I discovered what I always knew theologically but not practically. That God does indeed give faith to people to enable them to receive His gift of salvation and that both He is closer than I had thought and so are many people to Him.

So as a church it's incredibly pleasing to be moving towards being more missional and evangelistic. I will talk more about this in a future newsletter although if you've been coming every week you'll know my heart on this.

PROPHECY

I love prophecy, it is incredibly encouraging, and I would encourage all of us to take risks with its use of encouragement exhortation and comfort. Here are a couple of recent examples I'd like to share.

My friend Curtis Hinds from Toronto Airport Christian fellowship emailed me these words in April 2006. It was the first time I had spoken to him for at least three years. He wrote this after having encountered God afresh and felt that God had spoken to him about us over the pond in Brighton.

"I feel you are coming to a place of "critical mass" in your church. You have been faithful to "keep on" in the things that God has told you to do, As a result Chris the next push after "critical mass" will be the dynamic of the Spirit. I do not have a clear idea of what that dynamic will be (numbers finances, influence), but it will move you to the next level of growth".

In June 2007 John Coles the head of New Wine prophesied over me again without knowing me or the circumstances of our church.

He said that "The Lord is adding to your number those being saved". Again its profoundly simple as with many prophetic words but also profoundly moving to hear an encouraging word given to you from someone who doesn't know you or the circumstances of your church. He went on with other more personal words and a lot of encouragement that we are indeed breaking new ground for the Kingdom of God.

So our Christian walk together as a church family is bearing fruit. What I want to do this year is to encourage us in our private times with God. Archbishop Sentamu said recently that a Christian is "only as good as their prayer life". I believe if God is focusing on

anything this year then He'll be focusing on our private devotional times with Him.

So what must we do this year if we are to grow spiritually, and become more like Jesus? Well I read this recently from Rich Nathan another great vineyard pastor from the USA. I hope you like it: -

Giving: Giving of our service, time, talent and possessions. Jesus said: Where your treasure is...there will your heart be also. Do you have a giving plan where you regularly and consistently give to the church? Are you week-by-week using your time in a wise and balanced way that is pleasing to God? Are you giving away your talents especially in service to those in need?

Relationships: God desires his followers to live in loving, healthy relationships with others. Are you a part of a Vineyard small group? Have you effectively dealt with past hurts and traumas? Are you part of a healing community?

Outreach: God wants every person on earth to trust his Son, Jesus, and to enter into a personal relationship with Christ. Are you living a life of credibility and substance? Are you ready and able to share your faith in a way that suits who you are and is effective? Do you regularly offer hospitality?

Worship (and Prayer): Do you regularly worship God alone (individually) and corporately? Do you regularly engage with God in prayer and Bible reading? Do you engage in the practice of solitude and silence so that you can hear God speaking to you?

Spiritual Empowerment: God desires our lives to be filled with his Spirit so that we can minister in the power of the Spirit exercising all the biblical gifts of the Spirit and expressing the fruit of the Spirit. Do you live in daily dependence on the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you? Have you experienced the Spirit's filling? Do you pray for

the sick with confidence?

God-willing if we are weak in any of these areas, this year could bring growth as we deepen our spiritual roots with a God who as we draw near to Him, draws near to us. What a wonderful promise—to know and be known by God.

So thanks for all your time energy and commitment to our wonderful church. I believe God has much much much more for us. If we are faithful in our pursuit of Him putting aside all hindrances and the "sin that so entangles," I believe we are going to be staggered at some of the blessings He is going to bestow on us as a church to bring glory to His Son

God bless and thanks for reading and do give me feedback.

Chris



come as
you are