

twentytwenty vision

a look into the future



Introduction

As I begin my ministry at St Matthews Manly I have put together this document for a number of purposes. Firstly, I have written it to clarify my own thinking on what I will be hoping to do in coming to lead the church there. Secondly, I have put it together in order to give to the people of St Matthews that I will seek to minister alongside a picture of what I am praying will drive the ministry here at St Matthews. It gives them a chance to see what I am on about. Thirdly, it is an attempt to communicate my overall vision that I would like to pursue as the new Senior Minister to the Parish Council and existing and future staff of the Church. This is a document that I desire to have read by others and critiqued, assessed by leaders and responded to. I don't see it as set in stone but rather as a first draft paper in a process of consultative dialogue with the key leadership bodies of the church.

I am aware that there have been a number of existing statements regarding the vision, purpose and principles of ministry at St Matthews. Having read and reflected upon them my decision has been to come up with something fresh and new that is at the same time in harmony with what has been previously produced. The reason for this is that having spoken to various people at the church, my gut feeling has been that a fresh approach for how we understand who we are and what we are doing as a church will hopefully begin to draw us all together into a unified body across all ages and congregations.

So please take the time to read, reflect and critically respond to the ideas contained within as they are indicators of where and how I am encouraging us to head for our future years as a church. But please do this knowing that I am most keen that we travel that path together.

Yours in Christ's service,

Bruce Clarke
Senior Minister

SECTION I Vision

In moving to Manly, I am coming to a church that has a long history of effective ministry. I am also coming with my own set of leadership convictions and vision that I wish to build into the existing framework of ministry. This leads me to have three general convictions about how I will seek to lead the church in the coming years:

1. **Value the Past:** There is a fantastic heritage of ministry to look back at and give thanks for due to Richard Harvey's time of ministry and those who went before. There is also a distinctive St Matthew's culture that is a part of this that I would want to strongly retain. Values of a strong caring community, lay ministry involvement, a relaxed positive "can do" spirit and a passion for mission both locally and overseas. This is who I believe St Matthews is as a church community and these positive cultural markers need to be held onto dearly.
2. **Innovate for the Future:** There is also a great need to seize the day with passion and focus to re-engineer the church for the next 20 years. What has brought churches to where they are today will not take them forward in the future. Work will need to be done to reset the vision for growth alongside a practical strategy for how this will take place.
3. **Capitalise on the unique location:** I believe that St Matthews has a unique geographic location at the heart of the Corso in Manly. As an evangelical church this presents endless opportunities to connect with the community and do gospel ministry. Whatever the vision and values of St Matthews that are developed, this fantastic feature must be leveraged to full advantage in the pursuit of growing God's kingdom.

Vision

My overall vision as Senior Minister of St Matthews Manly is as follows:

To build THAT CHURCH that is known by it's grace, love and truth that is transforming lives through Jesus locally, nationally and internationally.

In short, my vision is driven by what is our reputation in the community. A church exists to bring glory to God in the world, not just inside it's own walls. The question that I want us to continually ask is this; What are we known for in the community? Is it 'that church with the great seats? That Church with the cool music, that church on the Corso that I walk my kids past to go to school?' If this is all that we are known by then we have failed in my estimation to be what Christ calls us to be as his people in the world. My vision is that we will be known by the way our church members live in the community such that our reputation is that St Matthews church on the Corso is *THAT CHURCH* where people find grace, people find love and people find the truth of the gospel. Where lives are being transformed though the power of Jesus Christ. **My vision is that we are known by how God is working in us to touch and transform the community of Manly and beyond.**

SECTION 2 Values

In thinking about defining who we are, I believe that there are 7 key values that we need to have driving our church: The Gospel, Prayer and Worship, Discipleship, Loving Community, Leadership, Compassion and Evangelism. Each of these is expanded below.

❖ The Gospel

The foundation for who we are and all that we do as a missional community is to be the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16). The gospel defines who we are as people - we were formerly rebels against God who have now been saved by grace (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). The gospel defines who we are as a community, a group of people from all manner of diverse backgrounds but who find unity in and through Jesus.

The gospel removes pride and fear so that people begin to get along who never would in the wider community. It draws together the rich and poor; Anglo Saxon, European and Asian; lower class, middle class and upper class (Galatians 3:28). This gospel also reorientates our lives so that we no longer live for ourselves and the vain glory of this world but rather seek the glory of God in all that we do and the salvation of the world (Mark 8:31-35). It is the engine that drives the life of this missional community.

As a community founded on the gospel, four core values follow that will define our life together:

❖ Prayer & Worship

A missional community seeks God in prayer and worships him in an authentic, personal and passionate way (John 4:23-24). The gospel changes our relationship with God from one of hostility or slavish compliance to one of intimacy and joy (Romans 14:17). The core dynamic of gospel-centred ministry is therefore worship and fervent prayer. In corporate worship God's people receive a special life-transforming sight of the worth and beauty of God, and then give back to God suitable expressions of his worth. I believe in a real experience of God as we come to God through faith in Christ. Prayer and worship are fundamental to how we express our response to God who has now become our loving heavenly Father. We love him and trust him with our whole lives as we offer ourselves to him in worshipful service (Romans 12:1-3)

At the heart of corporate worship is the ministry of the Word. Preaching should be expository (explaining the text of Scripture) and Christ-centred (expounding all biblical themes as climaxing in Christ and his work of salvation). Its ultimate goal, however, is not simply to inform minds but to transform lives leading the hearers to worship, individually and corporately, so that we are strengthened in our inner beings to do the will of God.

❖ Discipleship

The gospel of Jesus is a biblical message contained in the Bible that calls us to have transformed lives (2 Corinthians 3:18). Jesus commissioned us to go and make disciples and so this is what we

must be about. The early church was one that was Spirit filled but also devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching as they sought to become mature followers of Jesus (Acts2:42f). We are to develop both our spirit and mind, our heart and our head. We are not just concerned about how many professions of faith a programme might produce, but also how many disciples of Jesus are growing in their relationships with God as we take the word of God and apply it to our lives. For this to happen we will need to intentionally develop a discipleship process to enable people to grow and develop their walk with God through the help of others. Our goal is to bring followers of Jesus to maturity in Him (Ephesians4:13f).

❖ Loving Community

Prayer, worship, and discipleship all take place in the context of community and relationships. We pray together, we worship together and we learn together. The gospel calls us out of isolation into relationship with other believers. Belonging to Christ means not just receiving the blessings of salvation and forgiveness but also belonging to his people in community together. These relationships within the church community are to model the life of Jesus who came not to be served but to serve. Jesus calls us as his followers to imitate him and make love and service the distinctive mark of the church. It is what the followers of Christ are to be known for in the wider community (John13:33-34). Life is something that we do together as we practice the 'one another's' of the Christian faith.

❖ Leadership

The gospel transforms people from being consumers of life to becoming servants of Christ in the world. Gospel ministry calls us to be ministry partners together through leadership development. Jesus Christ as the risen King gives spiritual gifts to all of his people so that they can take his saving love and message to each other for strengthening and the world for redeeming. The method of Jesus growing his community is through the empowerment of his people to lead where they are. As we seek to be a gospel shaped community we are called to go out and engage the world that we live in. We must not just be an attractional community that draws people in but also an incarnational community that moves out with the love and message of Christ into the world we live in. **As a church we will desperately need to awaken the power of the laity.** In tune with an intentional discipleship process, there is a significant need to have a vision for all church members to see themselves as leaders for Christ, whether this is simply at home with their children, as a Christian in the work force through to leading great initiatives in gospel ministry.

❖ Compassion

God created both soul and body, and therefore he is concerned not only for the salvation of souls but also for the relief of poverty, hunger, and injustice. The gospel opens our eyes to the fact that all our wealth (even wealth for which we worked hard) is ultimately an unmerited gift from God. Therefore the person who does not generously share his or her wealth to others is not merely lacking in compassion, but is also *unjust*. Christ wins our salvation through losing, achieves power through weakness and service, and comes to wealth through giving all away. Those who receive his salvation are not the strong and accomplished but those who admit they are weak and lost. We cannot look at the poor and the oppressed and callously call them to pull themselves out of their own difficulty. Jesus did not treat us that way.

The gospel replaces superiority toward the poor with mercy and compassion. A missional community must work with compassion and mercy in our region through service even as we call individuals to conversion and new birth through Christ. We must work for the eternal as well as the common good and show our neighbours that we love them sacrificially whether they believe as we do or not. Indifference to the poor and disadvantaged means there has not been a true grasp of our salvation by sheer *grace*.



Evangelism

The gospel call is a call to evangelism and mission. Jesus calls us to take up our crosses and follow him and join him in His mission of taking the gospel to the world (Mark8:31-35). A missional church understands it has been sent into an irreligious world to proclaim the Gospel of redemption that is made possible by the Son's sacrifice for our sins and the Father's love for us. Every believer is sent on this mission by God just as Jesus was sent on this mission (John 17:14-16, 18; 20:21). To respond to this calling is to be missional. To neglect it is to disregard the mission of God and to cease being the kind of church that is following Jesus.

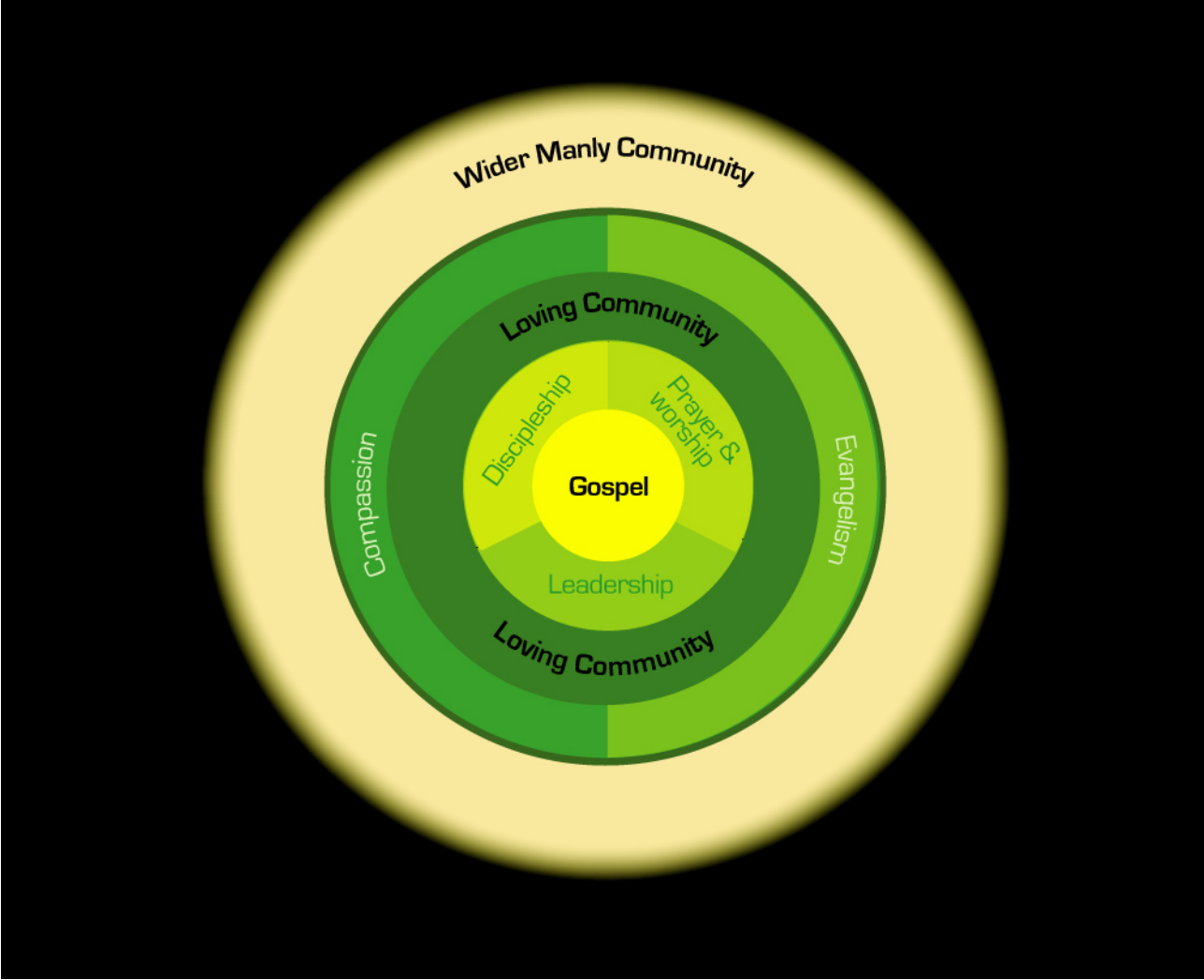
In addition to all this, I believe we should have a bias toward church and ministry planting as one of the most effective means of evangelism there is. New ministries and churches need to be started if we are to reach people who are beyond the influence of our present congregations and ministries. Because the gospel is for all the world and not just the Northern Beaches of Sydney or the wider bounds of Sydney, we will also be sending both short term and long term a steady stream of people out to places beyond our community as missionaries to the world.

Conclusion

The ministry we have outlined is relatively rare. There are seeker-driven churches that help many people find Christ. There are churches seeking to engage the culture through political activism. There are charismatic and Pentecostal churches with an emphasis on glorious, passionate, corporate worship. There are many congregations with strong concern for doctrinal rigor and purity and who work very hard to keep themselves separate from the world. There are many churches with a radical commitment to the poor and marginalized. There are churches that are strong in discipleship and lay ministry.

We do not, however, see enough individual churches that embody the full, integrative gospel balance as I have outlined here. I strongly believe that we must wholeheartedly embrace this holistic approach to ministry so that we truly become *THAT CHURCH*. a passionate, missional community that is transforming lives through Jesus locally, nationally and internationally.

I plan for these values to be all-pervasive at St Matthews Church in the future and would be calling on all staff members to embrace them as we seek to build the churches ministry together. The following diagram visually spells them out.



SECTION 3 Personal Commitments of Ministry Partners

If the vision and values of the community are to stick, we must have a simple and empowering language that calls people to action and life transformation. We must have **a vision for our people that is greater than just attending and giving money**. There is a great need to communicate in simple terms how this vision and these values are to affect us. Growing churches are typically high commitment churches who challenge their people in simple yet clear ways about what it means to belong. These five personal commitments are what I would be asking people to commit to who come to join us as partners in gospel ministry in this missional community.

- **Grace:** We call people to receive the grace of God as found in Jesus Christ through his life, death and resurrection as the basis for partnering with us in gospel ministry. We further call people to live out as well as share this grace found in Christ. We are saved by God's grace and we grow as Christians in and through this grace and we feel compelled to share this message of grace with the world.
- **Growth:** We call people to not just make a profession of faith but have a life transforming journey of growth in Christ. We encourage people to do this in various ways through practicing the disciplines of grace: Prayer, Bible reading, Journalling, Fasting, Reading & Study, fellowship, personal witnessing, baptism and Lord's Supper.
- **Groups:** We call people to belong in community through regular participation in Weekend Church and a Small Group community as a further means of fellowship and growth. We need each other to grow and belong so we need to commit to being a part of groups where this can take place.
- **Gifts:** We call people to discover and use their God given gifts for the growth of God's kingdom. We believe everyone has something to offer and that they can lead and influence people for the sake of Jesus as a result.
- **Generosity:** We call people to use their time, talents and treasures for the pursuit of transforming lives as followers of Jesus. The Christian life is about giving not receiving. If the missional community of St Matthews is to make an impact under God's guidance, it requires a community filled with faithful stewards of all that God has blessed us with.

Ministry Partner Commitments

