

Introduction

Our Vision and Partnership Sundays each year help us to be the church God wants us to be. It gives us a time to:

- **Remember** who we are in Christ, and what our priorities should be as his people.
- **Refocus** what we are doing as individuals and as a church family.

In both 2016 and 2017, our main focus has been on how we can be the “Light of the World”, being a blessing to our community, city and world. This has led to a few decisions and new initiatives which we hope will have a lasting effect for the years ahead:

- Developing our link with the Jubilee Food Bank
- Registering as a FairTrade Church
- Starting a partnership with Christians Against Poverty, with a view to running their Life Skills course (starting next year)
- Producing our Directory of Mercy Ministries
- Supporting the work of Open Doors for the persecuted church
- Increasing our mission fund allocation
- Starting a new Care Team at CCE

Some of these have yet to begin, or are in their early days. And that is as it should be! These areas of focus are not supposed to be a job that we tick off and forget, but rather a way of keeping us on the right track as a church, and setting our direction as we journey together in following Christ. With God’s help, we can expect the same to be true in 2018!

Thank you for taking the time to read . We hope that our Vision and Partnership Sundays will be a time of great thanksgiving and prayer as we look back on all God has been doing, and look ahead in expectation that he will continue to work in and through us, for his glory.

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Our Overall Vision

Our overall vision as a church is that we...



Glorify God—living in light of who he is and what he has done for us, and helping others to do the same.



Build Up—each other in our knowledge and love of God, using the gifts and resources he has given us as individuals.



Reach Out—giving opportunities for people to discover Jesus Christ for themselves, and making a positive contribution to people’s lives.



Send Out—people to serve God in their workplaces and their communities, and to support the mission of the worldwide church.

These four aims govern all that we do. Whilst some of our ministries and activities do more than one of them, we want to make sure that we don’t do anything which achieves none of them!

This general vision remains the same each year—Vision Sunday is about remembering this vision, and then thinking where to focus in the year ahead.

Vision 2018



“I remind you to fan into flame
the gift of God which is in you”
2 Timothy 1:6

What things do you expect to happen next year?

- Do you expect God to save some of your friends?
- Do you expect God to change your character, giving victory in the battle with sin?
- Do you expect God to give you times of deep refreshment and joy?
- Do you expect God to show you new things about himself, yourself, life and the world?

It’s so easy to expect too little. Even when we know the truth of the gospel, we don’t expect the power of the gospel to be at work in us. We don’t expect the power of the gospel to be at work through us in the lives of others.

Timothy was a faith-filled man. A gifted man. But he was also a timid man, and had started to expect too little from God. So in 2 Timothy 1:6 Paul reminds him to take what is already there, and to fan into flame. What a great picture! It’s a picture that suggests that there wasn’t really anything *missing* for Timothy. He knew and had accepted the gospel message. He had God’s spirit living within him and giving him gifts for serving the church. He just needed encouragement to put it all to use!

This year, we want to “fan into flame the gift of God that is in us”. What would that look like for you individually, or for us as a church?

Some initial thoughts are what fills the rest of this booklet, and there will be more on this in our Partnership Sunday material next week. We hope that the result will be that we will, to quote the missionary William Carey, “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God!”

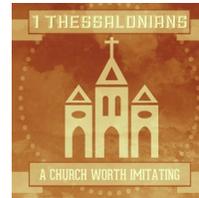
Teaching Programme

We want to be a church centred on God’s word, humble and expectant as we hear God speak, and work in the power of the Spirit. Here’s an outline of the series we have in store for next year, which we hope will fit into our overall focus of “fanning into flame”.



MATTHEW 26-28

We reach the final chapters of Matthew’s gospel, which centre on the death and resurrection of Jesus—the heart of our gospel, and the defining demonstration of God’s love and power. How amazing that the God who raised Jesus from the dead also promises to work with the same power in the life of his people!



1 THESSALONIANS

Perhaps the most positive letter in the New Testament, 1 Thessalonians is full of celebration of the faithfulness of the Christians there, and how the gospel has gripped them and changed them. And it then follows with the challenge and encouragement to grow “more and more”.



SELECTED PSALMS FROM 120-134

These Psalms are collectively called the “Songs of ascents” - prayers that used to be sung by the crowd on the way up to attend festivals. The journey up the mountain was seen as an allegory of the life of faith, and so these are Psalms which speak about the pressures and realities of living as one of God’s people, and the help that he can give.



ACTS 13-20

These chapters cover the great missionary journeys which established the early church. We see the power of the gospel to change lives, the nature of discipleship, and the focus of the church.



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BELIEVERS

Throughout the year we’ll also have five sets of two weeks looking at some of the disciplines and habits that can help us to grow as Christians. We’re planning to consider Bible reading, thanksgiving, prayer, giving and evangelism. In each case, we’ll have one week thinking about *what* it is, and one week thinking about *how* to do it.

What will be involved?

DISCIPLESHIP

It is having a strong personal relationship with Jesus that will keep our “spiritual fervour” (Rom 12:11). Conversely, many of us will know that when we feel distant from God and spiritually dry, daily disciplines like prayer, Bible reading and thanksgiving are the first to go.

So we want to have a particular emphasis on growing our discipleship culture at church. Growth groups and “one anothering” ministry will be important here. But also, the five sets of two weeks on Sunday looking at Building Blocks for believers will each give an opportunity for sharing resources, and encouraging accountability in these areas. By spreading the building blocks series through the year, we hope we will be able to maintain our Vision focus and momentum.

GIFTS

God promises in the Bible that every Christian, however new, has been given gifts of ability and opportunity unique to them. God gives them so that we can be involved in joining in God’s work in the world by serving others.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. **Rom 12:6-8**

So we want to help each other to explore, test and grow our gifts. This could involve questions similar to our “Spiritual MOT” (which we send out on people’s birthdays), but focussed on exploring gifts. But it will also mean having lots of opportunities for people to try different types of service, with the chance to review and receive feedback.

 In March we will be hosting a regional 9:38 day for people who are considering becoming gospel workers in the future.

MINISTRY AREAS

There are lots of ways in which we can get involved in serving. Two new initiatives are, first, the Directory of Mercy Ministry, which gives details of where members of the church family are involved in city-wide ministries. And second, we want to form a new Care Team which will add to our capability to look after people in the church family and “fringe” going through difficult times.

With lots of ministry teams serving week by week in the life of the church, we also plan to give “have a go” opportunities so that someone can have a go at something new, without fear of being signed up permanently!



TRAINING

Ministry training is an obvious way in which we can help each other to be “fanned into flame”. So we’ll have lots of opportunities for this.

We are expanding our preaching and teaching team, so that it does not just involve those who might preach on Sundays, but will help encourage and train men and women involved in any setting where they are speaking Bible truth to others. That could be giving evangelistic talks, leading school assemblies, doing “together time” talks at children’s church, or Bible teaching to adults.

We’ll work with individual teams to get a good system of in-team training for ministries we are already involved in.

We’ll also continue with our Prepared to Serve training modules, with a chance on Partnership Sunday to express interest in any of the modules to be done next year.

Bigger Picture Changes

Two other developments in 2018 will come which we hope will be beneficial for us in fulfilling our vision to glorify God as we reach out, build up and send out.

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

We are currently in the middle of an appointment process for a new Associate Minister. This will be someone who has already been to theological college, and has experience serving in a church.

In Ephesians 4:12 we are told that Jesus gives ministers (called “pastor-teachers”) to the church “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

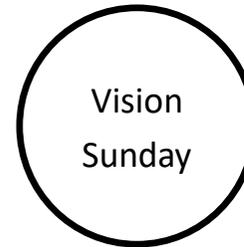
That means that the role of our ministers is not so much to *perform* ministry tasks, but rather to *prepare* the church family for the works of service God has for them to do. So we all end up serving together and serving each other, so that the church is built up. So we hope that finding a replacement for Matt (our assistant minister who left in September), and adding to our ministry team will very much help us all to be growing in our gifts and ministries.

BISHOP’S MISSION ORDER (BMO)

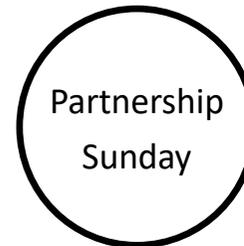
As a church we have recently become a BMO. This means that we now have a clear place within the Diocese of Sheffield, and are no longer seen as a church plant, but rather as an established church. Soon we will have a special service to mark the start of the BMO, and we hope it will be a time for:

- **Celebrating**—as we consider what God has been doing in the lives of many at CCE over the past eight years.
- **Commissioning**—as we commit ourselves to being the church God has called us to be, and as we receive the support, prayer and encouragement of gospel partners.

What next?



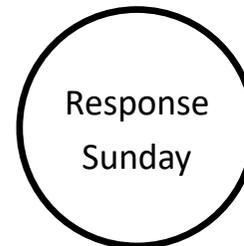
Please take home the Vision Packs so that you can read, pray and discuss with others.



Next Sunday is Partnership Sunday, It’s where we ask “Given our vision for next year, how can I be involved?”



On Wednesday 15th November we’ll have a special Church Prayer Meeting to be praying about the year ahead.



And on Sunday 26 November there will be space in the service for us to bring our responses to Partnership Sunday (the partnership packs will have some forms to help us think and respond).