

VISION FORUM

Introduction

I unashamedly use the word **VISION** (although it's almost become a dirty word) for two reasons:

- It's scriptural - Proverbs 29:18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." (KJV) "If people can't see what God is doing they stumble all over themselves. But when they attend to what God reveals they are most blessed." (Message)
- I believe this vision for Cromer Church is of God. It's His vision, not James Porter's or the Strategic Vision Team's. As a group we spent six months plus listening to what the Spirit had to say to us, praying into the vision and discerning what God was saying to us. I don't believe I wasted six months of my life if I did it makes me delusional and, worse still, a hypocrite. If I felt that, I wouldn't be here now.

Firstly, I want apologise to those who have felt hurt and disenfranchised by their understanding of our vision as of this moment. These forum events are an attempt to give a clearer understanding of our vision, how we can own it and become involved in its realisation.

Firstly, I want to concentrate on the four PURPOSES as these clearly state that "as a church we exist to..." and, if we do, these four purposes are fundamental to our vision and our understanding of it. I believe these could be seen as a linear progression flowing out from one to the other.

LOVE GOD

I trust we are all here because we have a relationship with our Father God (Daddy) It's an intimate relationship. How is this possible? For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (insert your own name here). Our Father God reaches out to us in love and calls us to Himself. If we accept the forgiveness of all our sin, past, present and future, made possible by the redemptive love of Jesus, demonstrated on the cross, then by God's mercy and grace we stand before Him and he sees not us and our sin but Jesus in all His righteousness. What grace, what love.

Our response to God's love in Jesus is to love Him in return through our individual and corporate worship and praise and our walk of faith with Him. This relationship is therefore rooted and grounded in love. Who we are in Christ is an expression of our love for our Father God. So, because of this, we exist as a church to **LOVE GOD** as a response to His love for us, and who we are as Cromer church is an expression of that

love for Him and one another. The mark of the early church was "look how those Christians love one another." They loved one another because God had first loved them. (We exist to love God.)

MAKE DISCIPLES

As the love relationship with God in Christ Jesus, which we have just identified, develops and grows so we want to know and understand more about Him and, in doing so, become more committed disciples, followers of Jesus. This is where **Making Disciples** naturally follows on from **Loving God**. We want to have the opportunities to grow in our knowledge and understanding of Him, to deepen our relationship with Him and to discover the potential that, by His Holy Spirit, He has placed in each one of us and the purpose for which He has called us to this place and this time. What part am I, what part are you called to commit to in the realising of God's vision for His church here in Cromer?

We want to have opportunities within the church family where we can grow as disciples ourselves and also encourage others along that discipleship pathway. This is about growing in our faith and discerning what gifting and purpose God has for us in His kingdom and more specifically here in Cromer church.

BE FAMILY

This has already been alluded to in **Make Disciples**. We encourage one another in our walk of faith because we are a church **family**.

As in all families there are different ages, with different gifting and skill sets, with different character and temperament. The vision recognises that equality of regard and inclusivity are of paramount importance. I apologise to you if that's not what you have heard and understood. Everyone in the church family, from the youngest to the oldest has a part to play in the vision for Cromer church becoming a reality. No one should feel excluded or of no value.

As already mentioned each one of us has a gifting to be released into the church and a purpose for that gifting to be released here and now for "such a time as this." This is what was meant by being released. Not to leave the church but to be given the freedom to be who you are in Christ and by the Holy Spirit use you God given gifts and skill sets in Cromer church in the here and now.

We have to recognise that most of our church growth in the past, and I accept not all, has been through transfer growth. Now there is nothing wrong with this. It is a natural expression of who we are as a location, a seaside town where many people move to retire. There are also many people from the surrounding area who are attracted to Cromer church because of its teaching ministry and opportunities to worship God in a style that best enables them to express their worship to Him. May we continue to grow

in that way, but we also need to recognise that in the long term this is not a sustainable growth pattern. (You may want to ask more about this in Q&A time)

As with any family we need progeny to keep the family going. If a human family has no children to sustain and maintain the family line, eventually, generation after generation, they will decline and cease to exist.

Hence the focus on Children Families and Youth. This should not be seen as the detriment to everything else currently taking place in the church. These things need to continue. But it is a recognition that if we don't grow our children families and youth we will have missing generations in our church family and if this continues over a period of time we will die.

This does not mean that because this is our focus there is no place in the church for the older generation. Just think of all those retirees who run or are part of the ongoing ministries within the church family. Without these committed men and women of God there would be a huge gap to fill and just maybe the church would not be able to function as it does now.

All of us irrespective of age or where we are on our faith journey have a part to play in this. Prayer is so important and that is why on the original action plan graphic, prayer was seen to encompass every area of the vision for Cromer church. We call all pray for this particular focus on CFY. Pray for specific initiatives, for specific CFY in the church and those in the community we know who are not at present coming to church, pray regularly for specific members of the children's team etc.

As we pray and support the ongoing work in the church family and commit ourselves to this using our gifting and skill sets and realising the purpose for which God has placed us here we are leaving behind a legacy for the present and future generations. This is the legacy referred to in the vision not as some people perceived. It has nothing to do with leaving money in your wills to Cromer church.

The family is also the place where we care for one another. Some people have expressed disappointment that "pastoral care" is not recognised by the vision. Perhaps it is not explicit enough but in the Vision Statement under Authentic Church state: "genuinely living together in smaller communities, modelling Jesus in authentic relationships - sharing the highs and the lows, the encouragements and the challenges, the successes and the failures – drawing others into a distinctive way of life."

LIVE MISSION

If all the above is in place, loving God encouraging one another in our discipleship path, being a family that is truly functioning together to realise our gifting and sense of God's purpose in our lives and being committed to one another in Christ we can't help but **live mission**. Not do it, live it. It is a natural expression of who we are as individuals and

as a church. My father-in-law was a Cliff College evangelist and during all-age services he would take a glass, full to the brim with water, and ask a child to come to the front and bump into him. The obvious consequence was that the water spilled everywhere. The point he made was, just like the glass, when people rub shoulders with us the love of Christ should spill out into their lives and our community. It continues the linear progression of our purposes.

We exist to share Jesus with our world as we **live mission** - being ourselves in Jesus and through His love, grace and mercy He will be Himself in us. Wherever we are, in the High Street, in Morrison's supermarket, at a special church or community event talking to our neighbours, Christ will spill out into the world so that the what is at the heart of our **vision to see hundreds of lives transformed by the love of Jesus** will become a reality.

All this, of course, is underpinned by or core **beliefs** and **values**. Our beliefs to be:

- God Dependent
- Jesus Centred
- Spirit Led
- Bible Based
- Mission Focussed

We live out our Purposes and beliefs through our **values**:

- Commitment to God
- Being Community
- Encouraging Diversity. Welcoming and valuing everybody for who they are.
- Being Relevant
- Encouraging Excellence in all we do
- Being Transformational allowing God to transform us and the lives of others.

in 2012 the bishop of Edinburgh, referring to the emerging church (Fresh Expressions) said "*If God is growing a flower, I don't want to be the one who stands on it* "

If this vision for Cromer church is of God, please, God, don't let me be the one who stands on it.