



In seeking a vision for GBC until 2020 LT and others explored took the following passage as our scriptural focus:

Jeremiah 29:5-7 (NLT)

⁵ “**Build homes, and plan to stay.** Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. ⁶ Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. **Multiply!** Do not dwindle away! ⁷ And **work for the peace and prosperity** of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its **welfare will determine your welfare.**”

We examined five areas of church life based around our core value of **Love God, Love Each Other and Make Disciples**, which during 2016 we had sharpened our understanding of Going Deeper in Worship (Love God), Being Happier in Community (Love Each Other) and Being Bolder in Testimony, Clearer in Society and Younger in Age (Make Disciples). We also reflected on the initial results of the survey conducted by Joe Warton on whole-life issues at GBC.

1. Love God: Going Deeper in Worship

“Love the Lord your God with all you heart¹.” It is good that we have different styles of worship and different congregations. Our growing Sunday morning Celebration is appreciated a great deal. There is a hunger for God and there is a sense of expectation. Some Sundays we particularly feel God’s presence. People’s individual worship is also healthy.

However, with larger numbers and dependence on technology can come a loss of spontaneity and the opportunity for individuals to contribute. We are good at sung worship yet these times can seem rather more performance led.

By 2020, we will have a greater understanding of what it means to worship God authentically and creatively, and we will actively participate in this worship both together and when we are apart.

What are the priorities?

We recognise that ‘worship’ is giving everything to God every day and this principle will flow into times when we come together. Yet, we are to be a worshipping community. We need to declare Jesus is Lord together. Worship is caught not taught. We need to be like diplomats coming back to the ‘embassy’ to share and get built up. Because we have all had different journeys in life, our worship needs to help us to move on.

We need to seek greater creativity in what is offered in worship (especially the use of silence, listening, watching, and location). We need to recognise the overall limitations on the site for Sunday mornings and find a second time for many people to worship together at the Church centre.

What’s the path from here to there?

We will improve the quality of collective prayer and encourage more prayerful involvement. We will continue to encourage people to arrive on time to worship, prepared to contribute and expectant to meet with God. We will take more opportunities to ‘declare who God is’ especially by praying and sharing testimony.

We will find ways to encourage people who are not musical to express their worship. We will better explain how we use the giving of money in worship.

¹ Luke 10.27

During open worship, we will allow more space for contributions that build on previous ones and make it clearer what is being asked of people (e.g. when to pray). We will introduce more visual clues (as well as musical ones) in worship especially looking for variety in expression. To do this we will particularly involve non-musicians and younger people.

We will carefully explain why we are trying different approaches.

We will explore different seating layouts, improvements to audio and visual provision in the Worship Area to help people feel more connected.

How should we (re)allocate time, people, plant and money do this?

To handle growing numbers, we will actively explore a two-service model of Sunday worship based around 10.30am and 4pm. We will transfer staff time resources from 7pm low attendance events to 4pm ones. We will undertake some of these at The Bridge Community School but we will not seek to plant a congregation on the Romans Edge estate. We will find a venue where the whole of GBC can worship together from time to time.

We will find a quiet space in the Church Centre to encourage worship whenever the building is open (possibly an extended Room 5).

We will provide more flexibility for staging, sound and visuals so that seating layouts can be changed more easily.

2. Love One Another: Happier in Christian Community

“Love one another as I have loved you”²We have grown happier as a Christian community by being a more welcoming, open and accepting place to belong. Our new building layout has helped with being more welcoming at services. Being a moderately large church makes getting to know people more challenging although not everyone needs to know everyone.

GBC represents people from a wider catchment area than Godmanchester residents. This is good as long as it is not divisive.

By 2020, GBC will be a place where everyone can be involved and is affirmed for who they are and for what they do and where contributions are valued and appreciated.

What are the priorities?

Whilst a sense of community can't be forced, it will continue to be encouraged to grow. We need to develop a sense of a “safe space” to make sure people are not excluded. People should feel relaxed in what they can offer and grow in their uniqueness. We need to ensure everyone knows their worth in God's eyes. We need to be a place of safety, faithfulness, godliness, love, and compassion.

To avoid becoming overcrowded as a Church community, we need to proactively encourage people to join small groups which are missional communities (especially on Romans Edge).

We need to grow as a multicultural community where people of different ages and ethnicity feel happy, safe and comfortable together.

We need to develop mentoring between people of all ages

We need to build rhythm into our church programmes and especially periods of rest into our community life.

What's the path from here to there.

² John 13.33-24

We acknowledge that it takes a lot of energy and can be difficult to change some things which have existed.

We need to improve the processes by which people join small groups and for there to be more diversity in the sorts of groups available. We will find ways to make small groups a better place to belong and for them to have more diversity. We will prioritise forming new small groups as missional communities and provide legacy support for long established but unchangeable groups.

We will find ways of thanking, encouraging and affirming people in their volunteer roles.

We will help people to have a better balance of life/work/home/church.

How should we (re)allocate time, people, plant and money do this?

We will carefully reshape the church calendar to include a better rhythm of learning, evangelism, and rest over the year.

We will strengthen the oversight of small groups to encourage people to belong and yet allow time for people to minister outside their group.

We will revitalise our mentoring programme.

We will reconsider the proposal that we rename our buildings so that there is, over time, a clearer distinction between the church as a Christian community, and the buildings as a community resource.

We will continue to use the Church Weekend as a way of building and deepening relationship across congregation.

3. Make Disciples: Younger in age

“Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren.³” We are in a better position than we were a year ago but still a way to go. It is easier not to take risks to allowing younger people (of every age) to fulfil their potential. In particular, we suspect we are not reaching enough people with families, 20-30s, and 65-80s.

In our activities, we currently have a good mix of ages helping in groups, activities, small groups and as children`s and youth leaders. We have moved away from the token young person. However, we struggle to see younger leaders emerging in the overall life of the church.

By 2020, GBC will be a place where everyone belongs whatever age or stage in life they are at, supported by peers and other ages, valued, participating, and growing as disciples together.

What are the priorities?

We need to ensure that our church represents the broad demographics in our community.

We need to ensure that there is a younger looking focus in all of our programmes (for people of whatever age) in terms of encouraging attendance and releasing leadership. We should encourage everyone at GBC to find a place of service now not later and especially encourage young leaders.

We need to continue to provide mentoring for the next generation of seniors, youth, worship leaders.

We should encourage both multi-age and peer group activities.

What`s the path from here to there? How should we (re)allocate time, people, plant and money do this?

³ Jer 29.6

We will intentionally seek out people to join teams and take leadership who are younger. We will encourage existing team members to allow others to step up. We will be willing to function differently to achieve this.

We will strengthen the opportunities to bridge the gap between being part of peer only groups to being part of something wider.

We will provide more opportunities for training for people to gain the skills they need (e.g. in Biblical and theological training, becoming an adult, parent, retired person) and for the use of internships and secondments of our young people.

We will restructure our Sunday programme to balance peer and all age events. We will form a team of all ages to do promote and facilitate cross and multi-congregational worship.

What's the path from here to there?

We will continue to give opportunity in services and small groups for people to share testimony. We will continue to provide opportunities for people to learn how to share their testimony and grow in confidence. We will make available a variety of resources to help take the next steps in sharing our faith with others.

We will value people and small groups whose primary focus is to build relationships outside of GBC. We will not expect everyone to be focussed on GBC activities.

We will encourage people to reallocate their time to give greater opportunities to meet others, and by belonging to a missional community.

How should we (re)allocate time, people, plant and money do this?

We will use small groups to encourage each other in our efforts to share testimony with others and focus on life issues.

We will encourage a strong positive welcome at all our events and encourage everyone to speak to someone they don't know before they speak to those they do.

4. Make Disciples: Clearer voice in society

"Work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you"⁴ We do not feel we are as well connected to the issues in our society as we should be⁵.

By 2020, we will be a church with a greater awareness of what is going on in the world around us, a clearer understanding of God's heart for these issues, and we will be more proactive together and as individuals in speaking and acting accordingly.

What are the priorities?

We need to be a church who have informed ourselves about core community and society issues so that we can take a more active role in valuing justice and acting accordingly.

We should seek to be involved in all strata of society, standing out for clear Christian values. We need to influence for good our work places, our community and our nation.

⁴ Jer 29:7

⁵ *We should explore the view expressed on the Vision Day that the sense of "Christian" at GBC has declined. From when to when might this have happened? Is this good or bad? Is this primarily about a greater use of the building by hirers? Or is it the case that the positive views about the building and some of our programmes are not matched with great positivity and interest in the Christian faith.*

Locally, we will do everything we can to help people see that the church community is a welcoming, inclusive place undergirded by clear Christian values.

What`s the path from here to there?

We will educate people on issues to do with economics, government, and ethics. We will draw attention to changes in ethical and social changes and encourage people to act. What are the issues? What does God think about the issues? How can we support each other in this?

We will encourage people to be involved more with local secular groups (as a preference to an equivalent church activity).

We will take opportunities to gauge the view of the church on issues in society.

We will take opportunities to pray for our government and issues in society.

We will actively promote acts of random kindness

How should we (re)allocate time, people, plant and money do this?

Using people with experience, we will provide more information about issues in society and about action options which can be taken using teaching on Sunday morning, Sunday evenings and small groups.

5. Make Disciples: Bolder in personal testimony

“And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?⁶” We are reasonably good at being visible in our community and have a good reputation with people outside the church community except with some of our ECL neighbours. We recognise that everyday conversation and authenticity play an important part in our testimony. People have felt that practising`our story` during church services has been helpful.

We sense that the numbers of people coming to faith are lower than they should be.

By 2020, we will have grown and act more like Jesus within Godmanchester and beyond so that our lives will give weight to our words as we deliberately speak about Jesus in everyday ways.

What are the priorities?

We should be loving, caring, transparent and trusted by the places we which we live. We should build relationships in which sharing testimony can be natural and routine. We should help people understand that other people’s negative responses do not validate our commitment to see people come to faith in Christ.

We need to increase the skill level of everyone to be able to give testimony to their faith. We need to help people see how personality fits with different styles of sharing testimony.

We need to continue to make a difference in the local community and to provide supportive programmes e g FoodBank, Lunch Club, FNP, Explorers, Littlefoot, HAMA, Parish Nursing, The Club mental health support. However, we need to find better ways to share testimony in those settings.

⁶ Romans 10:14