***Becoming a People of Prayer: Vision for HTS***

Growing Disciples Wider Younger Deeper

Making Jesus Known

*I don’t pray because Im into prayer. I pray because Im into Jesus, so I ask for his help. A lot.*

**Pete Greig**

*No-one can believe how powerful prayer is & what it is able to effect, but those who have learned it by experience.*

**Martin Luther**

*If we really want to pray, we must first learn to listen, for in the silence of the heart, God speaks.*

**Mother Theresa**

*“On Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.”*

**St Paul, 2 Corinthians 1:11**

**Introduction**

Nicky Gumbel writes: “We often associate the word ‘minister’ with leadership, whether by government ministers or by church ministers. In fact, the word really means ‘to serve’. Politicians are called to serve their countries. Pastors are called to serve the church. Doctors, who administer treatment to their patients, are called to serve the sick and the dying.

The Holy Spirit ministers to you. He brings authority greater than any politician, comfort deeper than any pastor, and healing more wonderful than any doctor. God ministers to you in the deepest part of your life by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul speaks of ‘the ministry of the Spirit’ (2 Corinthians 3:8). John Wimber defined this kind of ministry as ‘meeting the needs of others with the resources of God’. Wonderfully, this type of ministry is now available to you and me.”

Paul uses another image in Colossians 4:12. Here he was talking about a friend whom the Colossians knew, Epaphras: “Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always **wrestling in prayer** for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.” If we were wanting people to pray for us, how many of us would use the terminology that Paul used: “…join me in my struggle,” “…wrestling in prayer.” Wrestling is hard work. The Apostle Paul prayed differently than most of us pray in church prayer meetings.

Holy Trinity Southwell has traditionally had a ‘Prayer Ministry Team’ consisting of a small group of people who took part in a rota to provide a service of prayer together for those who plucked up the courage to come to the front of church at the end of a service. Whilst this was a vital and effective ministry, it was not well used, nor integrated into the other areas of church life. Nor was there a culture of giving thanks for answered prayer or sharing this with the wider church.

Other areas of corporate prayer have been within home groups (I’m guessing this may be the biggest area of prayer happening currently), monthly prayer first thing on Tuesdays (a handful of people), prayer before the Sunday service commences (in my experience one of the most important and effective fora for corporate prayer) and prayer triplets (highly recommended but again not greatly employed).

In our busy lives, many of us struggle to fit in prayer, still less realise what a lifeline it is in connecting us with our Saviour, to sustain us and bless others.

What does that say about us?

**The Vision**

As God’s children, we stay connected to the vine by regularly seeking him through the power of His Spirit. In this, we will become effective demonstrators of the Good News and will bless our community and those we encounter.

Prayer should underpin everything we do and provide not only the means whereby we ‘make disciples in all the world’ but how we all grow stronger in our discipleship journey.

Our recent teaching series on prayer has helped to raise its importance and provide some practical advice on how to pray and we can now build on this. Our church believes in ‘Every Member Ministry’, and prayer is no exception to this. There are plenty of examples in scripture referring to Godly wisdom offered to leaders by lowly people (eg 1 Sam 9: 6 - Saul’s servant directing him to seek direction from Samuel). Our membership can be empowered to seek God’s direction not just for themselves and each other but for the whole church & beyond.

**Gifts of the Spirit**

Many members of our congregation would not be able to name their God-given gifts. Within our family we will have healers, prophets, servants etc but we don’t yet know about many of them. Part of this vision is to assist in the revelation for each member of God’s family what their special gifts are and to encourage and enable them to use those gifts effectively for the glory of God.

**Unity**

Churches in Southwell are developing closer links again in order to act as a witness to non believers and increase our effectiveness in being God’s family together. Joining forces in prayer is key to this.

**The request for PCC is to support the following:**

1. Once a final version of the vision is agreed, communicate it to the whole church. A good time for this would be during the Staycation in October.
2. Leading this initiative is both a privilege and a huge responsibility that I know I can’t be effective in without the power of the Holy Spirit and the support of the church. I would be grateful for specific prayer for anointing for this role.
3. Support & encourage the whole church family to minister to each other in prayer. All ages.
4. Support a bi-annual training day open to all in order to learn from ‘experts’ and each other.
5. At every service, openly invite the Holy Spirit to minister to all present.
6. Link with our volunteers co-ordinator to broaden our prayer ministry team, aiming to include everyone, with an aim of developing sub-teams supporting every aspect of church life and providing an outlet for those passions that the Spirit lays on our hearts. This is obviously a huge aim but I believe its what ~God wants for his children.
7. At our services prayer ministry team (I like the term ‘***Enabling Team***’ because it speaks to the fact that we are conduits to the work of the Holy Spirit) will continue to offer personal prayer at the front of church after every service but all present should be encouraged to develop a culture of ‘prayer with coffee’ where needed.
8. When there is a particular great need or threat (eg a pandemic!), the whole church will corporately be encouraged to join with a time of fasting & prayer about that issue. This could be considered just before & during the COP 26 Climate Change talks.
9. Increasing the emphasis on interdenominational prayer both within leadership and within congregations. Formal links with prayer ministry leaders as well as church leaders will help with this. Special days of prayer & worship for all followers of Jesus together already occur but only a small proportion of HTS attend currently:

 World Day of Prayer (led by Churches Together) Annual March

Thank you for the honour & trust that you have offered to me in leading the prayer ministry of our church. I ask for God’s equipping for this important task.

*‘For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.’ Eph 2:10*

*‘Praise the Lord, O my soul’ . Praise you, Lord, for your amazing love and compassion for me, even greater than any parent’s compassion for their child. Thank you that you have anointed me and put your Spirit in my heart so that I can experience that love right now.’*

Yours in Christ,

Julie Barker