

# 'THE WAY'



In Christ | With Christ | For Christ

## Into 2023...

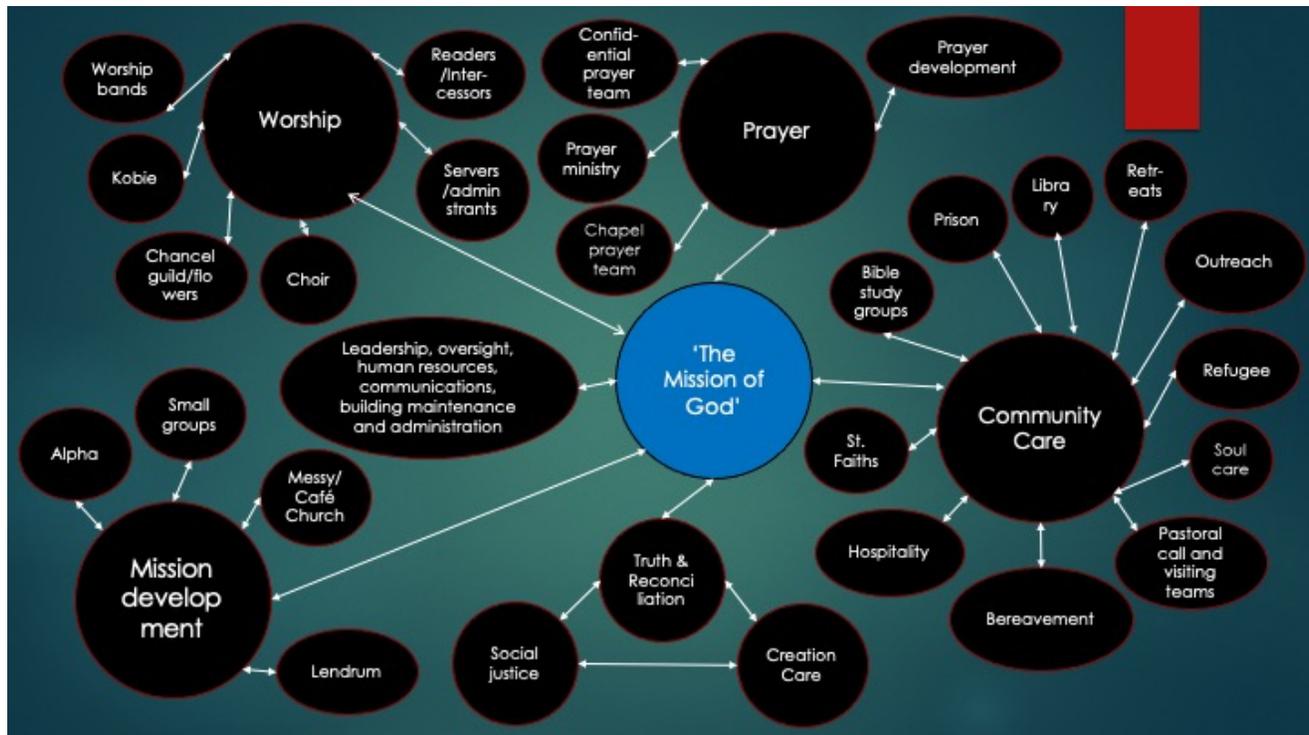
It's the next edition of *The Way* and the first of 2023!

I write about our steps forward in this new year, but first I'd like to begin with a recap on what we have been systematically working through over the past two years. These are the foundations that we trust with the Lord's grace will see us all flourishing and growing in 2023, with St. John's growing spiritually and numerically.

It's not been straightforward to lay these foundations as covid has forced swerves between the impacts of variants and infection rates, but here is how we arrived at the place we are now:

In 2021 we began thinking about what it means to be the Church; what is our purpose and what does it mean for us individually and corporately? We looked at this in the following ways:

- Our sermon series in the book of Romans: we saw the wonder of the Gospel of Grace and the imperative of participating in God's purpose and call - the mission of God.
- Our sermon series in 1 Corinthians 12-14: we saw that our God has given different gifts to all of us for the common good. We considered how we structure ourselves for that, and concluded that using the gifts God has given us in service toward that common good is the means by which God causes us to grow.
- Christ the King on November 21, 2021: we ended the liturgical year with a summary of how the different gifts, ministries and works of service were



playing out amongst us at St. John's. I then shared this picture, which we also displayed in the narthex, and will be restored there soon.

I concluded this sermon with an invitation for every one of us to be without fear, to 'get on the pitch and receive the ball' (to put it in soccer terms); to discover the excitement of joining with each other and seeing God use you as we all participate in the mission of God.

You can watch that sermon [here](#).

- We then moved to consider our individual equipping in our 'Christ in You: the Hope of Glory' sessions (more than 70 members of the St. John's church family have taken part so far). These sessions helped many participants to realise that a thought they have had, an idea, or a passion for a particular ministry might not be merely their own thinking, but very likely God's inner working in their lives. They were then encouraged to listen and act on these. New ministries have emerged at St. John's as a result of this. I wrote about the prison ministry last time. We also have development teams now in social justice, mission, and children's ministry, along with the growth in the prison ministry and the women's group started by Aneesha and Carrie, to name just five.

- Our sermon series in Colossians: we looked at Paul's desire for the Church to be healthy, happy and authentic and we saw the five marks that Paul believes reveals that:
  1. Jesus - it's all about him - he is at the centre of all we do
  2. Everyone growing in our love and knowledge of God
  3. Living as disciples of Jesus; individually modelling our lives after his
  4. Living as Jesus's family, the Body of Christ, corporately as brothers and sisters together
  5. Living with good news to share; living a Jesus-centred life in which we engage with the mission of God.
- Another invitation to get on the pitch came in the form of the Gifts and Ministry Fair on November 6, 2022.
- All this has been underpinned by prayer, for 'unless the Lord builds the house, we labour in vain' (Psalm 127:1). We are so grateful for the gift of God given to Robyn, Alan and those who work with them in providing times of prayer for us. They are yet another clear example of specific gifts given to some for the common good of us all.

In 2023 we will be building on all this. In no particular order of importance:

- On January 15, we will begin a series on the book of Acts. Some call it *The Acts of the Apostles*. Of course, a better title is *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*, for it is the Holy Spirit who transforms that band cowering in Jerusalem into a formidable missional movement. But the Spirit does that within a culture and a worldview that is polytheistic and hostile to this merry band and the good news they share. Our culture and its worldview is equally hostile, albeit in a different way. How then are we to live out the mission of God in this culture; how do we organise ourselves to ensure those five marks are present with all of us participating and growing in mission and ministry? *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* has a lot to say to us.
- More opportunities to participate in the 'Christ in You: the Hope of Glory' for those of you who have not yet done so.

- Follow-up sessions on the 'Christ in you: the hope of glory material for those of you who have done so.
- More opportunities in participation in all aspects of ministry.
- The development of everything on 'the road map' (see above), alongside the formation of those new ministries that I have no doubt will emerge in 2023.
- Plus more besides! To use my favourite acronym - IA2E4W - it's all too exciting for words. It really is.

And to ensure we don't burn ourselves out, we are adopting a structure called the '7 x 7', which arranges all our business into seven week chunks. This enables us to set aside time for business meetings, training and equipping, weeks of prayer and the weeks of sabbath rest (yes, really - we are scheduling rest into our calendar). There will be more detail on this as the year unfolds.

The words of Colossians 1:28-29 come to mind.

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

This, for me, is what my role as rector is all about. I trust and pray that in a year's time you will have grown in the fruit of the Spirit. We should expect that, as Michael Chase reminded us in his sermon on December 18. So let's lift each other to our Father, praying to see more of the fruit of the Spirit in each of us individually; praying to see his will done and his kingdom furthered. All this to the glory of our Lord, Saviour, King and Redeemer. It is Him we proclaim in all we do.

May God bless you most richly this year.

*Richard*