

# 'THE WAY'



In Christ | With Christ | For Christ

## An update on our discussions and replying to a common question

*Why all the gatherings?*

As Richard has been sharing over these last few editions of *The Way*, we're in the process of holding a series of open gatherings for discussion and discernment to support our review of service times. We've already held four gatherings, so I'd like to take a moment to thank all those who have participated to this point. Thus far, our conversations have been really good: participants have been sharing viewpoints and observations, as well as learning from each other's experiences and way of seeing things.

I feel that this last point is important.

I've been asked, a few times now, why these meetings are necessary to the process. I mean, if we're just looking to figure out how many services we offer on a Sunday, why not just ask people to send their votes into the church office? That'd be quick and easy, wouldn't it?

It's true that if the purpose of our process was to collect votes from people, then that might be the easiest way to go about it. But our process is about much more than that.

Over the past few weeks, Richard has been drawing for us an image of what a healthy, happy, and authentic church might look like, drawing on five points that the apostle Paul raises, found in the letter to the Colossians. Here, we find a helpful set of criteria (goalposts, if you will), that help to shape our planning and thinking in terms of what it means for our church family to emerge from our time of just surviving during the long time of what Covid has meant to us all. The last couple of years has seen a lot of change – not just in our own lives, but in the life of our church family as well. That means that we find ourselves having to make a number of choices, and to address a number of questions. Not least of which: what is the vision of the church that we are striving to work towards? And how best ought we to structure ourselves, in the present, to begin to grow the more into it? (You can see how our examination of Colossians is really helpful here!)

This is why our gatherings, and the conversations that have been taking place in them, are really important and really helpful. If we were to ask people simply to cast votes, we'd be asking people to share their immediate preferences, without necessarily any connection to a larger picture or vision. In fact, at worst, if we were to ask people to just cast a quick vote (maybe even on a polling app), we'd be setting people up to engage with the question from a purely consumerist angle: what do I want to get out of this church? What's best for me and mine?

Instead, we'll continue to hold times over the next few weeks for members of our parish family to gather and to be guided through a time of conversation and sharing. In the context of striving towards those five marks that Paul provides for our church family, we'll be taking a look at the options that are available to us, and figuring out what the pros and the cons are for each of them (so far as we can see). We'll find ourselves sharing personal experiences of being part of the family of St John's. We'll be able to articulate some of the things that we've learned from our journey with our brothers and sisters here, whether that be longer or shorter.

All of this is in aid of providing all members of our family the best opportunity to share rich and considered feedback with our parish vestry, who are tasked with making a decision in October as to how we will move forwards.

So, I hope that I've helped to explain why these meetings are an important part of our process. If you haven't had time to think about attending one of them, then no worries! You still have a number of chances to come in and share in a conversation. You don't need to register to attend, you can just show up as you are.

Here is the schedule of the remaining planned talks. They're all being held at St John's, in the conference room (main floor, right next to the office):

- Sunday 18th September, at 4pm
- Monday 19th September, at 7pm
- Saturday 24th September, at 10am
- Wednesday 28th September, at 7pm
- Sunday 2nd October, at 4pm
- Tuesday 4th October, at 7pm

I hope that you'll be encouraged to participate in our gatherings, and that you'll find a time that works for you. And of course, you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact Richard or myself.

Grace and peace to you, and for the day our Lord is leading you through.

Cameron+