

PRIORITIES PT 1

We all have priorities. We all have some things that are more important than others. It's not that we don't do other things. It is just that some things are more important. We have 5 things that are important to us as a church.

Cultivate Authentic Faith (Luke 15:11-32, 1 John 2:1-11, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 5:22-23)
Cultivate is a gardening word. If I left the garden to look after itself would grow but not in good way. It needs attention. Weeding, pruning. Talk about this next week. Check out the Grow pamphlet you have been given.

Build Great Community (Romans 12:1-18, 15:1-8)

- Be welcoming, friendly and hospitable
- Honour the Treaty - te tiriti o Waitangi
- Grow in being a multi cultural community
- Provide opportunities for meaningful relationships small groups course. Can't do it Sunday.
- Respond to practical needs
- Have fun together

Explore that some more on our Big Day Out. In fact the reason we do Big Day out is to help build community.

Be Intergenerational (Titus 2:4, Ephesians 2:19, Psalm 71:18, Mark 10:13-16)

- Intentionally encourage and facilitate relationships across age groups
- Involve all ages in core faith practices like communion, baptism, worship
- Value the contributions of all ages and abilities

Why have we made this a priority? We think it is Biblical. The Bible talks about older people mentoring the younger. See Titus 2 It talks of the church being a family. It talks of one generation passing faith to the next.

We also are responding to the research over the last few years that clearly tells us that putting ages into silos does not work when it comes to seeing the next generation come to faith. Our children and youth need to feel part of a wider community and see older people living out their faith in practical ways. The drop out rates of our young people from Christian families is appalling. Over 50% are dropping out of faith altogether.

Intergenerational communities in any part of society are rare these days. We have siloed into our little tribes and rarely mix across generations. If you are older it is easy to think. Well, we will let the young ones do things now. We have done our time. We will retire and rest up. Actually, young people are looking for mentors. Older folk who will take the time to listen and share their lives and struggles. Talk to one of staff if you might be interested in this and we will match you up with someone.

To be inter generational does not just mean having different generation in the same room. That is multi generational. But inter generational is about connection.

Fiona to share

Equip for Mission (Ephesians 4:12, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 19:10, 1 Peter 3:15)

God is a missionary God. He is a God who sends. He is a God to reach out and crosses boundaries. He is a God who seeks out those who are lost. At the very heart of God is a deep compassion for his creation. And so as followers of Jesus we are to be chosen people called to mission

Listen to what John says 1 John 2:9-10. For we are a chosen people, We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's very own possession. **As a result** we can show others the goodness of God, for he called us out of the darkness into the light.

- Encourage people to look beyond their geographical and cultural boundaries

Mission is all about crossing boundaries. Often when we here mission we think overseas. Different country and culture. And we think I could never do that. But most mission involves reaching beyond ourselves in some way. Engaging with someone in our street who is an immigrant from another country. Maybe it is someone who lives at the other end of town from you. Very different background. Maybe it is someone who has a different faith. Or maybe someone whom society looks down upon. Mission often involves crossing some boundaries of comfort.

- Equip everyone to talk about Jesus and the gospel message

WE believe it is absolutely critical to equip everyone to be able to talk about Jesus. God has placed you in a location in Invercargill that is unique to you. It might be a kindy or an office or a building site. Paul says how will people be able to respond to the gospel unless someone tells them. The reality is that someone shared the gospel with you. You can't respond to Jesus unless someone tells you.

And in the time we live in it is not easy to share our faith. People are highly skeptical of the church and any authority. Truth is what you believe and is seen as no longer objective.

Because people object to truth statements, one of the most powerful ways to start to spiritual conversations is to ask questions. Questions don't create a reaction. They are not threatening. WE want to equip everyone one of us, oldest, youngest, shyest to the most extroverted, how to have spiritual conversations that are natural and not cringy.

- Create opportunities to explore faith



While you play a crucial role in sharing the gospel, the church as an organization does have a role to play in mission. One is to provide places where people can explore more what Christianity is about. Offering two courses this year. In homes. 2nd and 3rd terms. One will be an Alpha, one will be a Christianity Explored course. We will need your help with these. Incite people, pray for people, help practically.

- Support mission work overseas with people, prayer, funds, and sharing of information

We currently support workers in Nepal and South East Asia, who are working in very unreached places. Robert Bester officially retired from his practice and is going back to Uganda to continue to use his skills there.

Mel to share

Serve Our City (Jeremiah 29:7, John 17:18-19 Luke 18:10-37, Matthew 5:16)

This priority comes from an understanding of place. That God is not just interested in renewing people. God wants to renew all of creation. God cares about issues of justice, issues of poverty. Issues of the environment, about the well being to the city. And as we serve the city, work to bless the city, we create good will and opportunities to share our faith. But equally we are helping extend the kingdom of God by such actions. They have value in their own right.

Jeremiah said to the people living in exile Here is what I want you to do. Become part of the community and pray for its wellbeing and bless it. Stop complaining and be who I want you to be. Very easy for Christians to complain and protest. Place for this. But we need to get stuck in and start making a difference. Invest in the place where we are. The early Christians had impact not because they got involved in the politics of Rome but because they went into the streets and looked after the sick and dying and fed the hungry.

Side note. Theology. There is a Dominion Theology around esp. in America that uses warfare language and sees the goal of Christians as imposing Christian values on society, sometimes even forcefully. That is not what we are talking about here. This is about serving those around us, esp the least, marginalized, disadvantaged, with full realization that the kingdom of God can't be forced on people by law and politics and will never be fully realized until Christ returns.

Four key ways we are working this out.

- Work closely with other churches As one of the larger churches in town, we help support efforts to bring churches and pastors together. Churches Together. Prayer for the City, Serve our City.
- Support and help those in need ie Woodchucks, Grace meals Christmas boxes.
- Food bank. Sunday.

- Support projects in the wider community We don't need to reinvent the wheel. We can join groups like Jubilee Budget, Red Cross Idea services. No 10. Hospice SPCA. Aged Concern. Habitat for Humanity Whole lot of agencies in town doing great stuff to help people that is totally in line with gospel.
- Continue to develop the Serve our City project 14 Sept.

Jude to share next week.

I get excited about these priorities. I believe everyone wants to feel part of a community where they belong. I believe we all need connections with the generations above us and below us. I believe everyone is looking for a mission, a purpose in life that is bigger than them. But as many of you will know it is messy. We are a bunch of flawed and broken sinners who hurt each other and want to be independent from God and others. We prefer to hang out with our own generation because oldies don't know anything and youngies think they know everything. We prefer to think about our own interests and not think about those who are hurting, or vulnerable or who don't know God.

So it's messy. So we are not claiming we have it all together with these. Far from it. That is why we have not changed them. We don't get new priorities each year, because we are still trying to figure out how to do these ones. But we think these are Biblical and reflect the heart of God. But the old saying is if you aim at nothing, you will hit nothing every time So that is what we are aiming at. Imperfectly. Sometimes not very accurately. But we are aiming for something.

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

Which of the 5 priorities excites you the most? Why? And the least? Why? Debate the impact of not having your "least" priority at all. What might be the result?

How could you develop connection with a person of another generation in the church?

What is the biggest hinderance you have to regularly having spiritual conversations?

Discuss the idea that God wants to redeem places as well as people. What might be some objections to this idea?

Today when church gets "messy", often people move to another church. When might this be appropriate? What are the issues with this?

Pray for Central Baptist.



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