

St. Christopher's in 10 years' time!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This is a letter to all members of St Christopher's, Pott Shrigley, as we continue to consider ways in which we can respond to the call to

¹⁹ Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20).

Some recent background

When I became Priest-in-Charge (March 15, 2023), Bishop Mark urged us to be bold, adapt, and reach out with the gospel. We embraced the Diocesan Vision: *"Together in Christ, Sharing Hope,"* focusing on the 1.5 million people in our region who need to know Christ's love. The synod outlined seven commitments, including engaging young people, transforming communities, and planting new communities of faith.

Ideas from our Away Day – Four areas of focus

With the above in mind, we held our Away Day in January 2024. Since then, we have been in a process of capturing some specific areas that build on our strengths and unique context. The 4 areas we collectively identified as opportunities are:

- **Young people:** Strengthen Junior and Youth Church through more leaders, an updated curriculum, and stronger links with the school.
- **Community outreach:** Build on existing connections (e.g., Air Cadets, Scouts, Dementia group) to share the hope of the gospel.
- **Improved communication:** Enhance our website, social media, and advertising (e.g., banners, Hot Pott magazine).
- **Inclusive worship:** Offer varied services, including a new midweek service, to meet our diverse needs.

So far so good, we've made progress, including:

- Increased social media engagement, bringing new visitors.
- Progress on a new website and enhanced advertising in Hot Pott.
- A new midweek service with growing attendance.
- Three discipleship book groups involving 24 women, including non-churchgoers.
- Updated children's play areas and steps towards a new Junior Church curriculum.
- Creative "invitation services" and All Age Worship attracting more families.
- More people stepping into leadership roles and leading our services.

This is already good fruit from our deliberations as a church. However, I believe there is more to come, and we need to keep reminding ourselves of the overarching vision to work ***together in Christ and to share the hope we have been given.***

What next?

For us to go forward with confidence, we need to be ready for change. I don't know what changes may need to happen, but I do know that it could mean letting go of some of the good things we do, in order to see the best. So I am asking us all to consider what is needed for a healthy and thriving church at St Christopher's, both now and for the next 10 years. I am asking us to be open to the Holy Spirit giving us boldness and confidence to change in ways that will enable us to welcome new believers into our midst and be ready to go out into the places we all have

influence and opportunity to share the gospel. And I am asking us all to pray and to engage in a process of discerning God's leading in how we can be ready for growth.

On Sunday 24th November we have our Gift Day, when we can review the contribution we make individually to the church and its vision, particularly the giving of our time, skills and finances.

I would also like to touch on potential changes to the interior of the church building, as I know this is a topic of current discussion. The PCC have been considering some options to make our building safer and more convenient to use, in response to a number of different needs and concerns that have arisen. I and the PCC are very aware that making changes to the building can be an emotive subject and I would like to take this opportunity to emphasise that no decisions have been made. Over the next 2-3 months, we will go through a process to consider how our church building space can best support our church and its vision. This will include discussion of the needs, challenges and opportunities we face, development of options and proposals, consultation and, finally, a decision-making process.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please pray that God will open our hearts and minds to be ready for what He has in store for us here at St Christopher's in the next 10 years.

With love in Christ,
Lynn