

HK Church Vision and Values Document

9 July 2019

As God's people we long to be more faithfully:

Worshipful

Created and redeemed by God, we desire to honour him with wholehearted Spirit-empowered obedience in every area of our lives.

Rom 12:1 "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him."

We worship one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16-17, 28:19), who alone is worthy of all honour as sovereign Creator (Rev 4:11) and Redeemer (Rev 5:12).

Creator: we only exist because of his will, and belong to him entirely.

Redeemer: we are called in Christ according to his good eternal plan, saved by faith alone through grace alone as the Holy Spirit joins us to Christ so that his once-for-all sacrifice on the cross bears our sin and wins our salvation.

The only right response to God is to give ourselves totally to him (Mk 12:30). Thus, as his people, he must be our great and driving focus.

Implications:

=> All of our meetings, whether in church on Sunday or throughout the week, are not only to be worshipful gatherings, but should equip us to live ongoing lives of wholehearted worship as we scatter from them.

=> The God we worship has always existed in loving Trinitarian relationship, and that love must shape all of our relationships too.

=> Jesus' summary of the law is that we love God and neighbour, so that our worshipping God will always be seen in our relationship with others.

=> We may only worship God because he has revealed himself to us, and joyful Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered submission to all he says is at the heart of that worship.

Biblical

The Father is revealed perfectly in his Son Jesus Christ, whom we know by the Holy Spirit through God's perfect Word, the Bible.

Heb 1:1-2a "Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son."

Without God's sovereign help we could neither know nor obey him.

Knowing God: although God's "invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature" are gloriously revealed in creation (Rom 1:20) only his written Word reveals him perfectly and makes us wise for salvation.

Obeying God: the Holy Spirit both caused God's Word to be written (2Pet 1:20-21) and enables us to understand and obey it. By God's Word Christians are "*thoroughly equipped for every good work*" and not partially equipped for some good works (2Tim 3:16-17).

Implications:

=> The gospel we believe is that taught in the Bible. Of first importance are Christ's death for sins and rising again on the third day, each understood according to the Scriptures (1Cor 15:3-8). The Bible in particular teaches Jesus' death as both substitutionary (Is 53:4-5) and sin-bearing (2Cor 5:21), with his resurrection being physical (John 20:27, 21:13). These simple truths are the heart of the Bible's gospel, and must be believed by all Christians.

=> As God's perfect and sufficient Word, the Bible has full and final authority in all matters of faith and conduct, so that what cannot be found in it must not be required of anyone, and what it states must be believed by and taught to everyone.

=> The Bible's perfection teaches us both to draw lines on doctrines (such as on marriage¹ as being the lifelong union of one man with one woman, and salvation being found in Christ alone), as well as to recognise permitted variation where different understandings can be duly argued from it (on the regularity of the Lord's Supper or the appropriate age for baptism, for example).

=> The fact that God speaks through his perfect Word teaches us to sit humbly under it as Christians, which is seen in our commitment to personal private Bible reading, as well as to it having the primary place in all our public gatherings. We resolve to test all sermons, talks and studies against the written Word, listening to our Pastors and leaders, prayerfully submitting to them as they teach the Scriptures faithfully (Heb 13:7, 17-18).

=> The magnitude and complexity of the Bible makes us grateful to God for Pastor-Teachers whose role is to "*preach the Word*" and teach "*the whole council of God*" so as to "*train Christians for the work of ministry*" (2Tim 4:1-2, Acts 20:27, Eph 4:12). We desire to be teachable and responsive, recognising our need for them to help us.

Prayerful

The Sovereign LORD teaches us to pray, and is perfectly loving and wise in answering all prayers.

Matt 6:9 "Pray like this: 'our Father in heaven?'"

The Bible teaches both that God is fully sovereign (Eph 1:3-14) and that Christians should pray (Matt 6:9-13). The fact that God is fully in charge is never a reason against praying, but rather a spur to trusting and asking. God guides and answers our prayers so that they work within his perfect will, being powerful and effective.

Prayer is more than simply asking for things, because the Psalms model at least these five aspects: praise, lament, confession, thanksgiving and intercession. Prayer expresses the family relationship we are brought into at salvation, since in Christ we call God our Father.

Our humble reliance on God is especially seen in our prayer lives, or its absence revealed by prayerlessness. There will be times when we "*do not have because you did not ask God*" (James 4:2) and it is always right to pray with thanksgiving and without ceasing (1Thess 5:17).

¹ See appendix 1 for a fuller statement on this.

Implications:

=> We long to grow in that Christian maturity which is more and more relational with our heavenly Father, and dependent on God, since Jesus said “*without me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5). We therefore commit ourselves to regular personal private prayer, as well as gathering with others to pray, in obedience to God and for their encouragement (Heb 10:24-25).

=> We are confident that God hears all our prayers, and answers them with perfect wisdom. We are therefore expectant that as we pray he shall work, and look forward confidently to the joy of answered prayers.

=> We rejoice that as we present our prayers and requests to God, so his peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:6-7). Hence the very act of intercession is one of God’s means of grace in our lives.

=> We therefore long that turning to God in prayer is an increasingly natural and common response, both personally and with our Christian brothers and sisters.

Evangelical

As Bible people, we stand in community alongside all gospel believers united by a common faith though scattered by history and geography.

Heb 12:1-2a “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.”

God’s Word teaches that there is only one gospel, one “*faith once for all revealed to God’s holy people*” (Jude 3), which unites all true believers across time and space (Heb 12:22-24). This single truth binds gospel believers to express unity with all those who affirm the basics at the heart of the gospel (1Cor 15:3-8) and likewise requires our distinction from those who claim the name of Christ without submitting their beliefs to his revelation (Rev 2:20, 2Tim 2:16-18, 2Pet 2:1-3).

The Church of England recognises this, being founded upon the teaching of the historic Creeds and the 39 Articles in as much as they express orthodox Biblical doctrines. This is seen most clearly in Canon A5 which states that ‘the doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures.’

Tradition, reason and experience are amongst God’s gifts to his church, yet none of these may sit over the Bible. They are to be valued, so that God’s Word is to be understood with the tools of reason, in conversation with tradition, and with our emotions engaged. Yet only the Bible is fully, finally and totally authoritative.

Implications:

=> Because evangelicalism puts the Bible’s teaching above all other authorities, we are Anglican Evangelicals and not Evangelical Anglicans.² Our resolve is to stand on the Bible’s unchanging truth, and to recognise all others who do so as brothers and sisters.

² That is to say that we are not Anglicans who are evangelical, since our foundational identity is as evangelicals. Our primary commitment is to the orthodox Biblical gospel, and not to any denomination.

Since denominations come and go, and change either for good or ill over the course of time, “*the faith once for all revealed*” has our primary loyalty.

=> Each of us will have some understanding of reason, knowledge and memories of tradition, as well as many personal experiences. Since only the Bible is fully perfect, that alone will determine our beliefs and views, however strongly we may feel the pull of reason, tradition or experience.

=> As evangelicals we rejoice in and fully value the ministry of women. Both men and women are equally made in God’s image, of equal value and worth. To be equal is not to be identical, and as a complementarian parish³ we consider that only godly men should lead congregations and preach at Sunday gatherings (eg 1 Tim 2). This traditional classical evangelical view on women’s ministry and women bishops puts us in company with the vast majority of orthodox believers both down the centuries and alive today.

=> We recognise and rejoice in God’s grace at work in many who don’t share all of our convictions, and that not all members of other denominations hold to all those denominations’ formal beliefs. We understand God’s call to be faithful his revealed will in Scripture, and remain willing to change our beliefs if we have misunderstood the Bible, since the church is both reformed and always reforming under the Scriptures.

Relational

Our members and congregations seek to love and serve each other well, with a distinctly gospel love.

Jn 13:34-35 “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

All Christians are called to live lives of mutual love and forgiveness, doing our best to live at peace with each other (Col 3:12-15). The gospel of Jesus’ death for sin on the cross is powerful to transform all human interrelationships, since faith in Christ brings a unity which breaks down all human divisions (Eph 2:11-22).

All converted members of a congregation are ministers within it, called and equipped by God to serve in all sorts of ways so that the body is built up and grows (Eph 4:11-16). Every church member can pray for and with others, and can speak gospel truth to others (Col 3:16), which are the cornerstones of ministry.

Although earthly needs do matter, and sometimes matter a lot (aches and pains, kids, schools, holidays, medical diagnoses, careers and so on) we long to be a church whose interest and love does not stop at such things, but includes a desire to see each other growing into maturity in Christ, who alone is of eternal value.

The Bible models congregations being in mutual relationship in various different ways (Rev 2-3, Col 4:16, 2Cor 8-9). United across our parish we gather as three congregations, and desire to be a growing family of thriving congregations, living in godly mutually-dependent relationship.

There are two ways in which a church can grow: in numbers and maturity. We desire both of these types of growth, and recognise that they are each achieved by the same means: Christians prayerfully speaking the gospel to other people.

³ See appendix 2 for a fuller statement on this.

Implications:

=> God's call is to forgive others just as He has forgiven us in Christ (Eph 4:31), and we remain committed to the slow, hard, prayerful work required for that. We long to be poor in spirit and meek, humbly recognising our need for change (Matt 5:3-6).

=> The great value of every human being, and our desire for Christ-like compassion, teaches us to have excellent safeguarding policies which are duly followed. We also resolve to pray that God protect all in our care, keeping each member of our churches wise, careful and righteous in their actions. We likewise hope to continue to be a place of open welcome and careful listening to all.

=> Recognising that the risen Jesus has gifted each and every one of us, and given Pastors to train and equip us, we resolve to use whatever we have and whoever we are as the Lord desires in the service of his people.

=> Understanding that the key way individuals and churches grow to maturity is by taking about the gospel with each other, we resolve to prayerfully aim for this.

=> Each congregation recognises our need of others, being grateful to God for the prayer, wisdom, support, strength, encouragement and partnership we share. Because the church belongs to Jesus, just as we each do individually, we repent of ever looking only to our own interests, and instead desire to serve others (Phil 2:4).

=> As we long to be a growing family of thriving congregations, we resolve to pay the costs associated with growth: financial and relational, affecting our comfort and energy.

Connectional

No Christian church stands alone, but rather depends upon spiritual relationships of mutual support and encouragement with many others (at differing levels and in various ways).

Rev 2:1 "The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands."

As Evangelical Anglicans we have various relationships beyond our Parish, through our spiritual agreement with St John's London Road, our Diocesan structures and gospel fellowship around the county with links both personal (Tudor Boddam-Wetham, Paul Kerry) and via North West Partnership (Carlisle Baptist Church, Hebron, Bethesda).

Our wider relationships are both Evangelical and Anglican. Our key evangelical network is through the North West Partnerships into the national Gospel Partnerships network. Our connection with other faithful Anglicans flows through the ReNew Conference (sponsored by Church Society and AMiE) which links us in with GAFCON worldwide.

We enjoy expressing partnership at various levels and in various ways beyond the above-named groups, when that is good for the gospel. We partner locally with ministries such as Keswick, NISCU, X:site, HOPE and others. Although such ministries are not churches, when we can cooperate for Jesus' sake and without confusing the gospel, we aim to do so.

The same Lord and gospel which unites us with very many brothers and sisters also requires us to distinguish ourselves from other fellowships, churches or para-church organisations.

Implications:

=> We are grateful to God for all the benefits we receive through our gospel partners. The cost of being connectional is sharing 'our' resources: prayers, pounds, and people. We already do this in various different ways, and resolve to continue doing so.

=> We rejoice in good relationships with our faithful Bible-teaching Bishop and many others beyond our congregations. Such relationships are based solely in God's revealed gospel, so that changes in those people's views, or in the personnel filling posts, may necessitate changes in relationship, because of the one true gospel.

=> We rejoice in gospel partnership that is based on a clear commitment to God's Biblically-revealed message, and express such ecumenism in very many ways. We voted not to join the Ecumenical County because not all of the denominations involved are clearly orthodox.

Missional

Just as Jesus came to seek and save the lost, so we long to see people coming to faith in Him.

Matt 28:18-20 "Jesus came and told his disciples, 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

All humans are eternal, destined to either the dreadful eternal punishment of Hell, with God's presence in wrath, or eternal blessedness first with Christ in Heaven and then in the perfect New Creation. The surprising promise of Jesus' offer of eternal life is not therefore the 'eternal' aspect, but the offer of 'life' for ever, as opposed to dying in eternity.

Just as Jesus came to honour his Father in obedience to him, focussed on seeking and saving the lost, so all Christians are called to evangelism in obedience to our Saviour. This work is both individual and communal. Churches should have at least three models of evangelism⁴ and each is vital.

Attractional services, since at every Sunday gathering the gospel must be clearly explained and understood, so that an unbeliever could learn to worship Jesus (1 Cor 14:23-25).

Invitational events with different levels of input, where friends, family, colleagues, neighbours (and indeed any contacts) can be invited with confidence to meet Christians and hear something of the gospel. We use levels 0-3 to represent:

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| Level 0 | No teaching input (forming or enjoying friendships) |
| Level 1 | Light input (such as a 5-10 minute thought or a testimony) |
| Level 2 | Some appropriate teaching (Q&A, apologetics, tough questions) |
| Level 3 | Christianity Explored or church service (with call to repent and believe) |

Personal witness and relationship (1 Pet 2:12, 3:15) which includes commending the gospel in our lives and speaking of it appropriately, and could be or lead to us sharing testimony, offering someone a chance to read the Bible 1-to-1, or inviting to an event.

⁴ Chris Green *Ministry Nuts and Bolts* 'Putting all your Evangelistic Eggs into one Evangelistic Basket'

With respect to the church sites we recognise that what the Bible means by church is people not buildings. Our buildings are a great gift from God, but ministry happens through slow relational work, and community use rarely translates into conversions.⁵

Christians are called to love God and neighbour as we seek to live like Jesus. We resolve to live lives of love for our neighbours in very many ways, showing deep compassion in their needs whilst ensuring that our deepest care is for their eternal needs.

Implications:

=> It is not only simple obedience to Jesus that teaches Christians to evangelise, but compassion. We are willing, both personally and communally, to give up everything (except the gospel) so that by God's grace we can see many saved for eternity. We recognise that this impacts our time, money, diaries and energy as all that is ours is really God's. We joyfully resolve to lives shaped by Jesus in sacrificial service of others.

=> Since every Christian is called to evangelism in obedience to Jesus, we resolve to pray that God uses each of us. In this we recognise that we all have different characters and capacities, yet we shall all seek to live faithfully as Jesus' witnesses.

=> We recognise that our services are not all about our preferences, but should be gatherings intended to serve both Christians and unbelievers. We long to care most of all that God is honoured, and secondly that others are served, before considering our own preferences (Col 3:16-18, 1Cor 10:23-24).

=> Since buildings are servants and not missionaries, we resolve to prioritise offering a warm welcome into a place where all can see and hear well. We have no desire to preserve what is old or traditional simply for that reason, and desire buildings to serve gospel ministry.

=> Our commitment to mission teaches the PCC to give at least 10% of our annual income away to mission partners who pursue gospel work elsewhere, as well as to desire generosity with all the skills, gifts, talents and abilities God has given us each.

Conclusion: Eternity

Churches are life boats, where it is 'all hands on deck' to save lives, and not cruise ships where people relax as others are responsible to do the work.

The 'cruise ship' church is classically marked by congregation members who are passive, prone to complain, and consider the work to be done someone else's responsibility

The 'life boat' Christian would be striving hard, within the wider team, to do as much as is reasonably possible because eternal lives are at stake: motivated and ready to serve.

The recognition of eternity within this document commits us to growing, individually and communally, more worshipful, biblical, prayerful, evangelical, relational, connectional and missional for Jesus' sake as we live in his Kingdom and serve in his life boat – the church.

⁵ See appendix 3 for more detail in the PCC's letter to the congregations, Feb 2017.