

Membership (2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 September 2017

Preacher: Chris Fry

[0 : 00] The first two slides we looked at actually at the beginning of the year. I've slightly altered them a little bit. And it's just an opportunity for us to see something that's happened really over the last five years in terms of the growth.

! We are a growing church and that's really borne out by those numbers. The most striking number I think is the Sunday morning service.

When we were meeting in the back hall I suppose it might have been sort of 40-ish, 35 to 40. Now we're pretty regularly getting 75 people in this hall and there are a lot of people who don't come as well.

Everybody did turn up on the day. We'd have 100 plus people which would be a crowd and it would be quite a different dynamic. We prayed for families and the Lord has been very kind to grant more families and more children.

The issue with students has got quite stuck on the national student front. Really praying that we might see a bit of a breakthrough this year in that way.

[1 : 19] But what has been encouraging and it seems quite noticeable over the last few months is a little bit of a flow through from the international cafe in terms of internationals coming along also on Sunday mornings as well.

Parent and toddlers thriving. It was great to sort of sense the buzz on Wednesday morning. And we paid a lot of attention to trying to strengthen the structures of governance and service.

So the number of deacons has risen to seven. We're growing and have grown a lot by transfer. The closure of Montpelier Baptist was a sadness but we benefited from that and there's been greater strength of service through that. We're growing in numbers by biology.

And there's an interesting group of people who are here because they are curious about Christianity. Christianity. So the internationals especially they have a curiosity about Christianity.

[2 : 29] What is it about? We are changing. So the ethnic mix. There's always been quite a rich ethnic mix but it seems very striking at the moment.

The age profile is actually quite low. Number of families as I say increasing. And we have an increasing fringe. So that on a Sunday morning there are a lot of people who are just looking. And that's the one time when they come. Numbers of challenges. Our numbers tend to restrict conversation.

We possibly feel quite frustrated in a way at the slow pace of conversion and discipleship. There's a dominant once a week attendance for many people.

Then there are lots of society pressures there. You can see on the screen there. And a sort of a niggling spirituality that dismisses or belittles church.

[3 : 36] And so we're facing in the next five years or less overcrowding on Sunday mornings.

Of course it could be argued that numbers sort themselves out if people don't feel comfortable coming in because there's just too many bodies here. And they'll go elsewhere.

Which would be very tragic for us. We don't want to be in that place. We are facing issues of passing the baton on from one generation to another.

We do know that other Brighton churches, evangelical churches, are under pressure. And that's only likely to increase. And I suppose we feel that we could have some real flashpoints of confrontation and opposition from government, local, national schools to some pressure points that up till now have just been suppressed.

But we could have some very interesting moments where we're going to have to put our head above the parapet more. What's quite pleasing, I think, is that we're seeing increasing planned and spontaneous interaction.

[4 : 59] It's just lovely to see the way people appear to be taking responsibility for relationships. And obviously using multiple forms of communication because we have it.

And there's still a big effort to make people welcome and included. And we are continuing the assistant pastor process. And we are encouraged as gospel people by the grace and peace of God, by Jesus' promise to build his church.

The gates of hell will not prevail against it. And by the genuine power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to save people and change them. So there must be some random thoughts.

As we go into groups, it might be helpful to look at five questions here. And as we...

I'm just going to read those questions. And you might think, hmm, I'd like to talk about that. And the different groups will have opportunities to take, in particular, one of those questions.

[6 : 11] So on the basis of biblical criteria, what are the most attractive marks of Calvary Church? What are the areas where change seems to be required to give Bible references to support?

So, you might not like to consider that one. How can the experience of Sunday become better and more significant for more people? It's quite striking that probably 50% of the people who attend here on Sunday just have an experience of Sunday gathered together with God's people of two hours. Just wonder if there could be much more made of that day. Wasn't it great last Sunday to see 20 people going off together and having a meal on a Sunday?

Now, whatever good is done during the morning meeting can be so strengthened and reinforced by another couple of hours afterwards.

And equally, it can be so diminished and snatched away by the sort of the cares of life. If you just sort of drop in here for a couple of hours and then drop out again and you're back into your old routine and so forth, I would suggest that you maybe lose quite a lot of the benefit that could be gained by conversation and prayer together.

[7 : 36] How can the experience of Sunday become better and more significant for more people so that all of us say, do you know what? That's the day I really look forward to. That's the sort of high point of the week.

As we increase in number three, as we increase in number, how do we maintain the experience of family? And many people talk very positively about here in the church feeling that we do know one another and there is a sense of family and that's quite precious.

So I'm almost taking it as a given that you think that's a positive attribute. But how do we maintain that as we get bigger? Give some practical examples.

What societal changes should we resist, embrace, adapt to, or both at the same time? Give some examples and testimonies.

So, you know, it's easy for us to just put, say, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, it's all going bad, bad, bad. But there may be some really good things out there that we should be taking hold of and saying, we can run with this.

[8 : 51] You know, we're not to be a church that lives 40 years ago. We have an endearing gospel, a great present message, which is completely appropriate for Brighton people in 2017.

So how to be discerning about things that are happening all around us so that we embrace and or resist? And how can we all grow in and as the church, as disciples, or as we were saying on Sunday, as learners of Jesus Christ?

How can we do that? I'd be very interested to hear what people have to say about that last point. So there's five groups there. I thought if we were to just take the chairs and put them into groups of five or six, and then each of those, I'll go around.

Once you've got the chairs all sorted, I'll have those questions put down on the chair. So if you wanted to join in with number one, for instance, there'll be a group of chairs over there, and that will be the question one group and so forth.

So one, two, three, four, five. If we've got more people, so if it's too much of a group, we'll just create another couple of groups as well. So just have a look at the screen and decide what you would like to join.

[10 : 22] We'll get those chairs set up. Ben, can you help with that? Just get those all organized. We'll have to probably stand up to vacate some of the chairs in order to make that happen.

Tim Marks of Calvary Church. What are the areas where change seems to be required? Give Bible reference to support. You have two minutes starting now. Okay. Testing one, two.

Yes, well, we said that the characteristics include we're bathed in prayer. I love that phrase. Meetings are bathed in prayer, what we do.

We're very hospitable. It's a positive thing. The sense of family. Love one another. John 13, 35. The ministry of the words. Steve said, underpins everything.

2 Timothy 2, 15. Welcoming. Hospitable. Hebrews 13, 1 to 2. Keep on something. Entertaining.

[11:31] Because you might entertain strangers. We debated Colossians 3, 16. Apparently Ben read that recently. And I was talking about teaching and admonishing each other.

Do we do that enough, really? And we're thinking about our own personal study. I was saying that perhaps are there people who are not actually regularly in the word of God?

And Steve said, actually, you don't have to be personally doing it. You can do it with your wife or in groups. Is that how we're growing? Can we grow more in that area?

Yeah. Someone said Acts 2. I think Jake said that. Sorry, Jack. Apostles teaching, prayer, communion.

I think he was saying that we do that. Some areas where we, from terms of change, there was talk about the sermons perhaps being too long.

[12:24] 50-minute sermon, concentrating for quite a long time. People struggle with that. Some people, particularly internationals. And perhaps the music needs to be more contemporary.

There was an issue. We talked about that. But, of course, we have to be careful that it doesn't become a concert. So. We finished.

Yeah, we finished. Very good, Mark. Thank you very much. Now, it's very important to capture these points, actually. So could you collate them all and give them to me at the end?

So five sets of paper. Group two is how can the experience of Sunday become better and more significant for more people? Give testimony. Lindsay. I feel like we've got quite scattered notes, so my group's going to help me with this.

We sort of were talking about, for families, everybody's experience of a Sunday is different, depending on if you've got young children or if you're on your own or if you're international. We talked about first families with children.

[13:47] And obviously there are space constraints. And also it's difficult with the Sunday club because you don't know how many you have on any given Sunday.

You can have three or 15. Varied ages. We didn't specifically talk about a solution for that, but one thing that Meg suggested was to have the children, when we're in the service together, to perhaps do a song, an interactive song that would give them more engagement with the whole of the congregation.

So it's not just like we sing a couple of hymns and then the children go and then we get on with things, but to make them more of a part of the word teaching and more a part of the community that's in here.

In general, we all mentioned the issues with space and it can be quite noisy on a Sunday morning because we have so many people. And we mentioned the issues kind of with the flow of things, especially on church lunch days when you've got to get tables and move chairs.

And we were talking about, well, Maria actually mentioned people who direct. Maybe that's making it too like a seminar or something.

[15:06] But we're getting to the point where there's more people now who don't necessarily know that tea and coffee is in that room or that there is a lunch on today. Whereas before, when it's a smaller group, people kind of knew the flow of things.

So maybe people that would kind of help direct more just say, oh, we're going to move in here now or do you like tea and coffee, that sort of thing.

Or there's a lunch on today. And we did mention that we do need to have organization. But at the end of the day, we are a family and families can be messy. So it's not going to be like we've got everything really smooth.

But we did mention there could be a bit more organization. I think that would help. We also talked about the Lord's Supper. And just feeding back what we said, it would be specifically for people with families of young children, it's hard to enjoy the Lord's Supper either before the service or in the evening service.

So having it incorporated in a main meeting from time to time. And then I think we did speak about, yeah, just said as well, we need people to serve, people to talk to newcomers because it shouldn't

just be placed, that shouldn't just be placed on a few people.

[16:33] We all need to be recognizing that we are here to be fed. But the fact is there are new people coming now, more people. So to speak to them and make them feel welcome.

Is there anything else? Group? Thank you very much, Lizzie. Well done. Group three.

As we increase in number, how do we maintain the experience of family? Give practical examples.

So we have the question, as we increase in number, how do we maintain the experience of family?

Give practical examples. I don't know, the first thing we talked about was seating. As more people come on a Sunday morning, sometimes it's tight until the children go out.

As a church, as a whole, we're good at making people feel part of the family. Good at, as various people said on past experience, here we're good at integrating as a church, as people.

[18:07] There's lots of love looking out for people, looking out for each other. People said we haven't got family here. They feel the church here is a family.

And you do get to know people and have conversations. And the next time you see them, it's not the same conversation or something about you.

The conversation can move on because somebody's remembered something you've said the week before. So you know something of each other and you establish relationships through that.

Maybe as we grow as a church, maybe sometimes there could be smaller groups on some weeks.

Maybe as a church, maybe as a church, maybe as a church. Midweek to meet outside of the church sometimes.

But then meeting in smaller groups to make sure that things don't get clicky with getting to know only those people in your small group. And then at bigger events, only talking to the people that you know from that small group.

[19:22] And not integrating with others. Yeah, and when we get to know people, we can trust those in the church.

We can listen and they can listen and take on board what we say.

And like on Wednesdays, if we break off to smaller groups in prayer, then maybe people are more willing to ask for prayer for a matter in a smaller setting than the whole big group.

And as a church, as the church gets bigger, to work more on maintaining, getting to know each other. Could be coffee, could be meals out, but just to make sure that we continue to work on that.

Thank you. Thank you very much, Julie. Well done, group three. Thank you. Group four. What societal changes should we resist, embrace, stroke, adapt to, or both at the same time give examples and testimonies?

[20:37] Thank you, Penny. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Another thing was how we now live in a very multi-faith society.

And we need to recognise that we are called to be inclusive to those people. We're called to be welcoming to them, but not encourage belief in false gods, not encourage homosexuality.

And it's recognising where that line is, is quite important. and also that not just accepting that these people are of a different religion or a different belief system, but recognizing that there is still an urgency to preach the gospel to those people.

Like Julia said, John 14, 6, Jesus himself says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through me. And we need to stick to that.

[22:36] Rather than saying, oh, okay, you're of some religion. Like, it's not going to give you eternal life.

Another point was statements must be backed by biblical evidence, not just personal opinion. So, obviously, teaching is kind of the main area for that, but if you're going to suggest something to somebody, or if you're going to say, oh, I saw this working, do you want to try it?

If it's not got biblical grounding, should we be doing it? General worldliness. Living distinctively resisted to the generic pressure in society to conform, to all have the same ideas.

Technology came up as a point to, as something to use. Because of the act. I mean, there is the danger of access to much more information.

But then, like, myself and CU, we use social media all the time. It's our main form of engagement with our members and outreach. So, it has positives and negatives.

[23:55] We have to be careful about how we use it. Again, the culture of freedom, slash tolerance, slash acceptance, particularly in Brighton. Yes, it encourages sexual deviance and homosexuality, but at the same time, I think it was in our committee meeting the other day for CU,

we spoke about this, saying that, actually, it's given us an opportunity because everyone is wanting to believe in something.

But no one is sure of anything. So, that gives a window for the gospel. It gives a culture of seeking. But in that, it does give competition. You know, every religion is trying to compete and say, look, come to us. It's making the gospel clearer and louder than the other voices.

Another point Alex made with environmental issues, so veganism, particularly humanitarian aid, now that we've had all the hurricanes and, like, the increase in natural disasters, and saying how that we can actually witness to other people by how we care for the planet.

So, the world is God's creation, so we should treat it that way. And we should treat other people that way as well because we are all created in God's image no matter what we believe.

[25 : 27] There is one creator, and we should respect his creation. You know, there's a verse that says, we are to be stewards of the earth.

So, we're called to respect it and help it. And obviously, an example from Calvary is, like, you recycle, you send it. You know, we're making the dresses to send to Africa. So, it's embracing the culture that we have, recognizing the opportunities and kind of seeing where we can preach the gospel into what is otherwise pretty miserable outlook for the city.

Yeah. Thank you very much, Penny. Well done. Thank you. And finally, group five, how can we all grow in and as the church, as disciples, learners of Jesus Christ?

So, I think we just started by identifying just the word of God as central to our growth as disciples ourselves.

as learners, from the great teacher. And then, the word of God also is, as the central point of us, then discipling others, too.

[27 : 03] And I suppose we were kind of just thinking through the different contexts, perhaps, I think, aside from the main Sunday kind of meetings, where we can grow as disciples and support one another in discipleship.

So, yeah, I mean, I suppose that the Wednesday meeting and maybe, and the Thursday meeting, so the Wednesday meeting, when we have, I guess, once a month, there's the, the, the kind of Bible study focus in, in that time.

and I guess there are some opportunities to kind of discuss some of the application of God's word in our, in our lives with, in, in smaller groups in that, in that time, which for, maybe for, for some can be, very helpful.

On Thursdays, obviously, this is just, a fraction of people who, who attend the, obviously, there's the YAG time, which has been a great blessing over the years for, some of the young adults in the, in the church.

So, obviously, reading the word of God, studying it, and then, looking to application in our, in our lives, and then just having that, you know, precious times of fellowship as well at that time.

[28 : 33] Again, that's just, obviously, not, everyone is, is, is, is blessed by that, that, that time attending that. And so, we were looking as well at, ways of, kind of, for all of us to, to encourage one another in, in, in Bible reading and the application of what we're reading.

I mean, obviously, we got that, uh, great challenge from Phil to be reading through Isaiah and, um, and the challenge it was. But, uh, but, but the, I guess, some of the, should identifying some of the fruits of, um, where we are, where that, where was that challenge, the kind of opportunities to say, okay, um, we're, we're, we're embarking on this, and, um, and maybe checking in with one another through the weeks, whether the Wednesday meeting or, or in the other days, um, of, of the week, um, checking in how we're getting on.

I know Aaron set up a little, kind of, Facebook group to, to check in of people, kind of posting some, some thoughts there on, on, on some of the things that they, they were reading and, and getting from, from Isaiah.

So, so yeah, I suppose there was just, just different ways in which we could be through the week, um, uh, encouraging one another in Bible reading, but also the application of, of, of what we're reading, um, and, uh, perhaps with the focus on, on the, uh, what's being preached on a Sunday. So, so one-to-one times, um, of discipleship were mentioned as, um, as being very, very helpful, um, but obviously the, the, the challenge of keeping the regularity if you're, somebody's meeting in a, uh, in a trio or, or just one-to-one with, with, um, with, with someone and going through, through, um, scripture, then, then that's, you know, there, there's some great, great things about, um, about

doing that and perhaps we should be, can we be doing that more?

[30 : 45] Can we, you know, and, and how could we be doing that more? Um, Brenda mentioned about, um, perhaps, uh, knowing what's coming up in, in terms of the, um, the, the calendar of what will be preached about and, and how we can then, maybe as a church, um, how could we, uh, helpfully keep a, uh, apply a focus on, on, on that in some, in some way, um, uh, yeah, long-term planning, looking ahead to what, um, what we're going to be focusing on in the church.

So, um, yeah, is there anything, Brenda, in terms of that, is there anything applied? Um, no, it's just, as a, as a, as a, as a, as a, yeah, you know, many people, maybe because, you know, the Isaiah, the beginning of Isaiah, was a child, um, you know, and, that no other people had known that was coming up.

Hmm. Okay. We could be better prepared for what would be coming up. Okay. Yeah. Or, or even, maybe if, you know, if there was going to be preaching coming up on, on another book or a particular area, sometimes we have preaching on, on a particular, um, doctrine or, or topic, whether, whether, even, you know, that people might want to, to read a bit, or, yeah.

Cool. And, and yeah, I guess the final point there was just about, um, encouraging accountability, um, in terms of, uh, in terms of meetups and maybe there are some people who'd be quite happy to go up to someone and say, hey, I'm really, um, struggling with this and if you could pray for me about this or we could go through the Bible together, um, go through this, um, uh, book together or whatever, uh, but other people might, might be less inclined to do that for whatever reason and, and perhaps just then encouraging a culture of, of, of, of that kind of meeting up and, and accountability in our church family, um, so applying, again, applying the word to our, um, Christian living, um, and yeah, so, that's.

Thank you very much. Thank you everybody for the contributions. Let's, um, pray for the lunch.

[33 : 28] Thank you, Father, for being together and we pray your blessing upon our time. Thank you for the food you're giving us and, uh, we ask that our conversation may be sweet and mutually encouraging in Jesus' name.

Amen. And if you have had interesting, something quite interesting has happened, something's been said, it's a good time now actually to follow that up and just to sort of get, get alongside that particular person and say, well, let's talk about it a bit more.

Um, don't forget the book. Five pounds. Still five pounds. Right. Lunch in there. Hope you brought yours because if not, there isn't any lunch.

Ha ha ha. Ha ha ha ha. Thank you.