

HEARTBEAT

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[0 : 00] The last time we gathered together for Heartbeat, someone said to me afterwards, you were just so relaxed, and it was just great to see you so relaxed and casual up the front. So I'm going to do that again tonight.

Just bear with me for a moment. OK, ready to go. So I think 12 months ago, we sat in this room, and we had this in front of us, Heartbeat, November the 8th, and it was our picture for what was ahead, it was the input, in fact, the entire input of what I gave and talked about.

It was in the beginning of our series on radical, what it meant to be a radical disciple of the Lord Jesus and the radical choices that we need to make as a church. And one of the questions that Stuart Wendy put in front of me as we were doing the preparation leading up to this is it would be good to highlight some of the markers, the changes, the progress we've made in the last 12 months.

Because if you were here 12 months ago, you would know that this was a time of an element of uncertainty. We picked radical because of a chance for us to really, we needed to really focus on what we're doing as a church.

We just found out that Sam Lowe, one of our ministers here, was leaving after eight years of ministry, and it was a time of change and flux for us and what it meant.

[1 : 28] And so I think there's a lot, when I look back at the last 12 months, there is so many things to celebrate, where 12 months ago, I might have been feeling a little bit uncertain about where we were or where I was and how we're going to move forward.

God has just kept pushing us forward and been building momentum throughout the course this year. And yet at the same time, in many ways, it's been a hard year. I feel it.

I feel like it's been a hard year. There's been a number of things which have happened, which I didn't want to happen. And yet what God does, he just uses those times to continue to sharpen us. And so we, as I said, back in November the 8th last year, where plan was to move to two congregations, we've done that.

And our translation team, which was like two or three people, has grown to, we celebrated last time around 14 people, something like that. And can I just put out a bit of a thanks here tonight for Flora and Dorothy, who have just taken the My Purpose Checkup document and totally translated the thing in the last week or two or in that timeframe.

They just got onto it. And under their own initiative, and I just want to say that is superb. That's a massive amount of work.

[2 : 45] So thank you for that. So we've seen that change. We saw miraculously with the provision of the money we raised on Vision Sunday, as well as the increase we saw in our pledging.

The Barnets, which we were not expecting to be able to do this, but Barnets came on full time just after Easter. And so we were intending on employing a children's pastor. And we've not just got a children's pastor, we've got a children's pastor and a maturity pastor wrapped up into one.

And so that's worth celebrating. We've just celebrated boom. That didn't exist 12 months ago. And one of the things of bringing a children's pastor in was in fact to start an after school kids ministry that has now started.

And I think James has done a phenomenal job in that by building the team first. But he spent a lot of time preparing the team, building for it.

And so I'm just so excited about that. We were looking to employ Takeshi and John. And frankly, you can say boom all you like, but no one can say it like Takeshi. And he ought to be, he's not here, is he?

[3 : 54] He's studying for exams. I'm assuming he shouldn't have been here. But yeah, so we've been able to employ these guys and they've done a fantastic job and helped in a big way in the transition from three congregations to two and turning us more transcultural.

We got a faculty approved to move furniture. That went through. 10 years ago, that would have been a bun fight. Now it's not. Now it's actually a move forward forward because we wanted to see more and more people seated in this building here in the gospel.

So while we haven't broken the 200 barrier, which we talked a lot about this time last year. In fact, the goal for that was to do it between, you know, 2018 and the end of 2020.

2020, we have building momentum in that direction. And it's fabulous. So we're now almost halfway through our vision series for this year.

As you know, our theme is His Purpose, Our Purpose, My Purpose. And I was asked a really good question about a week or so ago, a couple of weeks ago.

[5 : 08] And the question was, why this, why now? Why this, why now? Why His Purpose, Our Purpose, My Purpose? Why this and why now?

And my answer is, because it's all about breaking the 200 barrier. That's why we're doing it now. In case you're new to this, the 200 barrier is, if you like, a cultural barrier that the vast majority of churches face.

Very few, in fact, something like only 10% of churches will ever break the cultural barrier of 200 members. I introduced it to us at Heartbeat last year and set the goal that we'd break it before the end of 2020.

The 200 barrier is where a church, either deliberately or just by the fact of inertia, decides, subconsciously or consciously, to stick below 200 members because it's the way they like things to be.

And I said, God may choose to never grow St. Paul's, but for us to deliberately limit the size of the members of St. Paul's, I find that morally, spiritually reprehensible.

[6 : 30] We've got to do everything that we can to grow God's kingdom. And so one of the key aspects of breaking the 200 barrier was the need to align the church around the mission, vision, values and strategy of the church.

That's one of the key elements of breaking the 200 barrier. And there's at least about eight of them, but this is one of the key ones. Alignment is about all ministry pulling in the same direction.

What happens when every ministry pulls in the same direction is that it forces out the personal agendas and the personal preferences that abound in churches that prefer to stay small.

And it causes us to focus on God's mission. That's what it does. And so that's what this vision series is about. It's about alignment.

It's about giving us clarity on our purpose, on how St. Paul's, in fact, not just St. Paul's purpose, but how St. Paul's, in fact, structures itself, how we balance and how we resource these five purposes.

[7 : 43] The ministry one's hiding behind me here because ministry is what we're doing tonight. So it's balancing these five purposes. In fact, at this heartbeat last year, I mentioned six crucial decisions churches need to make in order to grow in size and depth.

And three of them have to do with this one, ministry. Have to do with leadership, service, ministry choices.

The course that some of you have been introduced by me, from me, called Breaking 200 Without Breaking You, mentions eight key strategies for breaking the 200 barrier.

Five of the eight have to do with this one, the way we think about ministry, the way ministry gets done.

And that's our focus tonight. And the shift that we are looking to do in the next 12 months is to move away from a church of individuals filling roles on rosters, plugging gaps, doing a task, to being a church where we do all of the work of service within teams.

[8 : 58] That is, we're doing it together. We're serving together as opposed to me just doing my bit that I want to do in my time. Now, this is simply a flow on from what we looked at last Sunday.

If you were here on Sunday, you would have heard from me about Christ-exalting connectedness in God's family.

God's intention is for all of humanity to magnify him. That's week one. Week two, God's intention is to draw us together in order to magnify him.

Week three, which is coming up, now that he's drawn us together to magnify him, what is his intent for each one of his children? He wants every one of his children to grow up into the likeness of his true son.

He wants all of his children that he brings into his family that he gathers to himself to grow up into the likeness of his son, to have the character of his son. Week four is that he doesn't want us just to grow up into the likeness of his sons.

[10:03] He wants us to grow up into the ministry service attitude of his son. That's God's internal purposes. And when he builds up his church in that way, he sends us out into mission.

That's week five. So let me just take you to the Bible really quickly on this one and the idea of teams. Jesus modeled something for us in terms of relationships.

From all of his hundreds of followers, he chose 72 for a special ministry. Luke chapter 10, he sends them out two by two. Doesn't send them out by themselves, sends them out two by two.

And Jesus knows, Jesus himself didn't, knew that you could not know 70 people closely. And so he also, amongst that 72, had his 12 for a closer partnership in life and ministry, where he specifically instilled stuff and did things with them that he didn't do with the 72.

In Mark chapter 3, verse 14, it says he appointed 12, designating them apostles that they might be with him. But even 12 are sometimes too much, and especially if you're an introvert.

[11:11] And so Jesus has a closer bond with Peter, James and John, just three of the 12. And on a number of occasions, it was just those three who had a special time of development with Jesus.

Often, in fact, at the most significant times of Jesus' life and ministry, those three were there. And sometimes even three is more than some kinds of friendships will allow.

And Jesus seemed to have a particular bond with John, which John mentioned several times in his gospel, because he got an opportunity to do that. The disciple who Jesus loved.

By the way, that's me. I'm talking about you. Don't know what it says about the other 11, but anyway. But five times in his gospel, he refers to himself as the disciple who Jesus loved.

And so Jesus had his crowds, he had his 72, he had his 12, he had his three, and he had his one.

And as he put his mission and his church in motion, he not only modeled these various levels of relationship, he sent his ambassadors out into teams with different levels of relationship.

[12:26] See, life and ministry for Jesus was life and ministry together. It was not even for him, it was a solo affair. Life and ministry for him was life and ministry together.

Then you get to the Apostle Paul and he follows the same pattern. Christian ministry appears, is a ministry together, service together. I don't think it's an accident that in every single church, the Apostle Paul planted, go and read Acts on this, he appointed not one elder and pastor, but multiple elders.

And when Paul and Barnabas, they had their tiff and they fell out, and they were wondering what to do with John Mark who abandoned them on the first mission, these two giants of the faith did not have a falling out and disappear and do their own thing.

They formed new teams, got the blessing of the church, and then they were sent out. Barnabas took Mark with him, he sailed to Cyprus, Paul chose Silas, and he departed in Acts 15, 39, 40.

When he met Timothy in Acts 16, he asked Timothy to travel with him as his ministry co-worker, even though Timothy was the junior, learner, just a kid, learning still.

[13:49] And over the next six years, of the 13 letters that Paul wrote, he addresses them to the churches as coming from him and Timothy, even though Paul was the one who wrote.

He wanted to send it from the team. Now, of course, the pattern of our life together is not just a matter of ministry, strategy, or partnership.

I said on Sunday, the New Testament is just, is just this dominance of connectedness language.

And so I want to take us to one of those passages now, really quickly, 1 Corinthians 12, 12 to 27.

If you've got your Bibles, if you've got Bibles apps or whatever, open them up now. I'm going to jump through this really quickly. I want to see six things, briefly, this is not six, this is not a six-point sermon, it's not double length, this is six things, really briefly, that highlight about life together in here.

So, first of all, it says, the church is a body that's made up of many parts. Made up of many parts.

[15:07] And without the parts, there is no body. Church is made up of many body, many parts. It's a body made up of many parts, but without the parts, there is no body.

I went looking for my Mr. Potato Head today. When I say mine, it's the kids. You know, it was beside my bed, but not anymore. I went looking for it today, because it would have been great to have it here in front of us, but imagine Mr. Potato Head and with just the body, but no bits attached to him.

That's the picture here, that it's not a body without the parts. Number two, verse 12, the unity of the body is achieved through the diversity of the parts.

That is both the diversity of the people and the diversity of the gifting of the people. Verse 12, the body is a unit, though it be made up of many parts, and though all its parts are many, they form one body.

So, you'd have Mr. Potato Head, you'd put all the arms on and the hat on and the legs on and nose and the ears and everything, you go, there it is. It's now looking like it did on the box.

[16:21] It's functional. Number three, third point, the diversity of the parts, all the diversity of the parts, all the difference of the parts, serve the unity and the function of the body.

So, verse 14, now the body is not made of one part, but a many. If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I do not belong to the body, it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

And if the ear should say, because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body, it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of smell be, or sense of hearing be?

What? Yeah, that's right. If all I couldn't hear, that's right. It's the Bible right here? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

And so, if you had my Mr. Potato Head here and just had all the arms, you go, well, that's dysfunctional. That doesn't, and yet, that's how we often work church to be.

[17:30] We often have church in that way. When we work church to be the homogenous unit principle, where we like, gather with like, then it looks like a dysfunctional, weird looking Mr. Potato Head.

Number four, all the parts need each other if the body is to function correctly. In other words, whatever your part is in the body, don't ever say, I have no need for that other part over there. Verse 20, the eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you. And the head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. And the parts that we think are less honorable, we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lack it. So the negative warning here is don't say, I don't need those other bits.

[18:42] I don't need those other bits. Paul says here that those who we view as weaker or unnecessary or unimportant are absolutely necessary.

every, I mean, this church functions on the gifts of so many people working together. Sunday by Sunday, you see that.

There is so many things that happen in the background that you don't even see, that you know. And without those things not functioning, the place starts to fall apart real quick.

see what happens if the person who normally cuts the grass doesn't turn up for three weeks. The so-called unnecessary bits.

See what happens then. The person who most of you don't see who weeds the gardens. How quickly it would deteriorate.

[19:49] How quickly people would say, well, no one's living there. Verse 22, on the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

They're not just optional, they're necessary. Not just helpful, they are necessary. Number five, let's have the same care for one another so that, this is verse 25, so that there should be no division in the body but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

These verses are all about what James would call favouritism.

Certain parts that we'd want to honour over more, others, James would say, no, no, there's no favouritism with the church and this is saying care for everyone equally, honour all equally.

It's no mistake that this description of the body is immediately followed by 1 Corinthians 13. The great chapter of love.

[21 : 02] Whatever our gifting, it is only effective if it is used in love. Number six, if only my Sunday sermons move this quickly. Number six is an encouragement to trust in God who composes the body as he wills to compose it.

To trust God for this. Verse 18, in fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

Let's give thanks to God that he has chosen, that he has ordered, that he has appointed, that he has distributed gifts at his goodwill for the unity of the church.

That ought to encourage us, it ought to humble us, regardless of whether we hold a prominent place or we don't have a prominent place in the body. God has given you your place.

And yet, this text ends with this final challenge. We're told in verse 18 that God arranged the parts to everyone that he wants them to be, but somehow, verse 18 doesn't negate verse 31 where Paul says, but eagerly desire the greater gifts.

[22 : 31] In other words, grow up in your service. Now, you can't get the greater gifts unless God chooses to give them to you, but presumably here, their earnest desire and preparing of themselves is seen as a preliminary to receiving the greater gift, at least in some cases.

And so, the challenge here, I think, and this is something we're intending on deliberately picking up, quite intentionally picking up in the next 12 months in St. Paul's, is to, is the challenge to go further, the challenge to train, to develop, to equip others, to recruit, to seek new opportunities to serve.

That's the individual challenge for us all. And, and the other thing that we're seeking to do is that this connectedness and interdependency culture that you see in the New Testament, the language of the New Testament, is something that we traditionally really emphasize through community groups and we're going to continue to emphasize that through community groups when everyone in the community groups and connected, but it's also the way we want to see our ministry done amongst us.

Connectedness. Working as part of a team. Can I just divert a little bit here and emphasize this point? I've been here for nine and a half years.

possibly the greatest delight I have had as a senior minister of St. Paul's is the team that I work with day by day.

[24 : 19] That, that's for me, stands out as the high point of my nine and a half years at St. Paul's. Without a doubt. And I would extend that to talk about wardens and parish council as well.

Without a doubt. I have the privilege of working with a number of staff and, and a good number of staff over the time that I've been here and a good number of that, those staff for some time who have all contributed to my growth as a disciple and contributed to me in ministry, in sharpening my ministry skills.

We have worked closely together. I said to someone recently, when Sam left, it really hurt me in the sense of I really felt his loss. Think about this.

I work with him for five days a week. We traveled, as I said, I think it is farewell. I've been in hotel rooms more with Sam than anyone else apart from Nat. We work together closely five days a week for eight years.

That's equivalent of 40 years of Sundays. That's equivalent of 40 years of Sundays. Together, as a staff team, we have had greater impact than any of us could have had individually exercising our gifts.

[25 : 49] We have collectively deepened and expanded the ministry of St. Paul's. I want to suggest that the reason that we continue to push forward as a church is because you have a phenomenal staff team.

I'm not talking individually. Every one of us individually is weak and we have our failings and our blind spots and our bits where we're not gifted at.

But collectively, we are strong. we are strong. And collectively, we've had a greater impact than any of us could have done by ourselves.

And I would suggest that collectively, we have deepened, we've expanded the ministry. God has made us all very differently and yet collectively, we make up for our weaknesses.

We've all grown together in gospel conviction. We've grown together in character and we've grown together in ministry competencies. We have fellowship, we have encouragement, we have fun and we share the burdens and the joys of life.

[27 : 05] Sometimes it feels more like the burdens and the joys but we share the burdens and the joys of life. If you've never noticed it before and this is not, if you think this is me being proud then forgive me for that but just hear the point.

We have modelled something, the staff team over the last nine years or so and particularly increasingly so in the last four years have modelled something as a staff team that the church should see, acknowledge and duplicate in all its ministry teams.

I think it's the best illustration I can throw in front of you. It needs to be duplicated in every ministry team. We want to see it deployed. We are modelling something that we want deployed across the church.

everyone serving as part of a team, loving each other, growing in character, in competency and together you will achieve more.

Every member of St Paul's serving as part of a team on purpose. Now, I have gone over my time already.

[28 : 28] Do you want to just watch the video for a little bit? Is that alright? And then I'll come back. Let's have a break there. So it is turning into a sermon.

The six points are over by the way. So this is just a bit of a taster for team ministry if we can get that up. Before we do, let me just hit a couple of things.

As we move on, one of the things I said some time ago was that each church needs clear expectations on what are we expecting for our disciples. So what's our discipleship pathway? What does it mean to grow up to be a member of this church and to grow as a disciple of this church? And secondly, what is the ministry pathway? I'm happy to say that both of those things have now been developed for St Paul's.

The discipleship pathway, it's right there, it's up in front of me, it's up there, has been developed. And you'll notice that each one of these five purposes is reflected up there.

[29 : 33] The goal we have for every member of St Paul's, including myself, is to continue to reassess, am I on purpose? For God's purpose, for my life, for this church, am I aligning myself with it?

Am I growing in each one? Which is my weakness one that I need to work on and have a plan in the next six months, 12 months, to get better at that particular purpose, whatever it is. And so you've seen that rolling out through the course of this vision series.

I want to commend James again for that and developing that for us. Secondly, on your seats, you've got this big thing. You'll notice that all of our ministry teams are connected in one way or another to our five purposes.

purposes. And this is just a snapshot, if you like, a visual image. Thanks, Jess, for putting this together of how every ministry at St. Paul's is connected to one of these purposes, bringing greater alignment to every single ministry team.

You know where you fit, what your purpose is, and how your purpose fits into the mission and vision of St. Paul's. That's what this is all about.

[30 : 45] Not every single ministry team is there, and you'll notice there are two things, such as ministry support, which is not quite red, it's an orange, it's out there a little bit. Ministry support's job is effectively to support the five purposes, and next gen, because it is a unique ministry and that certain requirements are there because you're leading young people, it sits over slightly to one side, and because of the age of the people that are there, it sits to one side.

However, all five purposes get worked out in next-gen ministry. We just want to separate them out and make them slightly distinct because there are certain higher requirements for leaders in that area.

So ministry teams, we've got alignment as a disciple, where you fit. As a disciple, my expectation as a member of St. Paul's is to grow in these five purpose areas.

Where do I serve? In one of the teams, in one of the five purpose areas, and our goal for every member is that when you are in a ministry team, if you move over to ministry pathway now, is that you will know at what level you fit, who you report to, and what your job description and expectations are within that ministry team.

So that's the ministry pathway. We like to see everyone fit into the ministry pathway, and on top of that is that what sits over the top of a ministry pathway interacting with a ministry pathway is ministry grid, which is what that lady just mentioned in the video.

[32 : 23] It's a whole training program that's, it's an online training program designed to develop you in whatever part of the ministry pathway you fit.

And so the intention as you move forward is not to hand someone, there's your job description, we need you to help out at boom, we'll see you if something goes wrong.

And there's your job, go and fill that function. Ministry is part of your discipling, it's part of your connectedness of growing a disciple of the Lord Jesus. And so our plan as we move into, to roll it out totally between now and the end of next year is for every person to know where they fit in ministry teams, to be placed in ministry teams, to know where they fit in that ministry team, to be developing in that ministry team and to be coached in that ministry team so that you've got relational connection as you develop.

That's the plan to roll out, that's our major agenda, is to get the members of St. Paul's engaged and on purpose in the next 12 months.

We see it as crucial in us breaking the 200 barrier. So, by this time next year, I would love to be standing in heartbeat and for everyone here to be able to say, I know what my role is, I know how this role serves the vision, I know how this role is connected to the purpose, one of the five purposes, I'm on a team, I know every member of my team, I know who my leader is, and I'm being coached and developed personally and intentionally by my leader.

[34 : 21] That's what I'd like to see by this time next year.