

St Thomas' Church 2020 Vision

Sharing God's love from the heart of the city

There are two powerful Biblical images which shape the life of our church, and give us a picture of what it looks like to share God's love from the heart of the city:

River of Life – The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of a river flowing from the Temple to the Dead Sea. It was a river which flowed from the place of worship to the farthest and lowest point, bringing God's life, healing, and fruitfulness to the world: 'Everything will live where the river goes' (Ezekiel 47.1-12)

Salt and Light – Jesus said his followers were to be both the *salt of the earth* – scattered throughout society, creating a thirst for God; and also the *light of the world* - a city gathered on a hill which cannot be hidden, lighting the way to God (Matthew 5:13-16).

By 2020, we want St Thomas' to bring those pictures to life in our city. We want to be known as a church:

- Where people are passionate **worshippers of God**, devoted to a life of worship and prayer, applying the Bible to our daily lives, responding to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and growing ever more excited about Jesus,

- Where people are deeply committed **followers of Christ**, actively supporting, equipping, encouraging, and caring for one another as we live distinctive and holy Christian lives, and

- Where people **love our city**: where we follow Christ out of the building to serve the needs of our community, and where people are awakened one by one to God's love and purposes for their lives and come to a living faith in God, many for the first time.

Goals for 2015-2020

We believe that God is calling us on an adventure of faith: 'so that we might not rely on ourselves but on God.' (2 Corinthians 1.9) This will lead us to a much greater openness to God, and a deepening reliance upon His strength rather than our own.

So by 2020, we want to be:

1. Committed to the Holy Spirit

To help us become more committed to the Spirit, we will:

- Dedicate ourselves as a church to prayer, so that we become known as a prayerful people, and where all that we do is rooted in God;
- Encourage church members to be praying regularly on our own, in small groups, and in a variety of church-wide prayer opportunities, such as prayer meetings, 24/7 prayer weeks, Easter meditations, and guided prayer weeks;
- Foster a greater reliance on the Holy Spirit in our gathered worship times, encouraging the full range of spiritual gifts, including prayer ministry and the prophetic gifts.

2. Committed to Personal Growth

To help us grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, we will:

- Keep the challenge of Scripture central to all that we do, through high-quality preaching, Bible-study in small groups, and personal Bible study, all done in the context of God's grace;
- Give regular opportunities for us to make or renew our personal commitment to live as dedicated followers of Jesus Christ;
- Encourage every church member to belong to a small group where we can be supported and inspired to grow in our faith;
- Develop a church-wide strategy for discipleship, and appoint a discipleship co-ordinator to help us implement that strategy;

- Develop an effective church-wide approach to our welcome and integration of newcomers, from first contact to full commitment;
- Offer training in discovering and developing our spiritual gifts;
- Offer leadership development through training, including running the *Growing Leaders* course, and providing opportunities for practical ministry experience.

3. Committed to the World

To help us join in God's mission to the world, we will:

- Encourage every church member to seek to bring another person to Christ by 2020;
- Develop a culture of invitation, where we become confident to invite friends to church events, with regular guest events and services;
- Release the missional imagination of the church, so that church members are confident and equipped:
 - ◇ To make the most of the opportunities we have as full-time Christian workers in our daily occupations, networks and neighbourhoods to share our faith and bring people to Jesus, and
 - ◇ To start and sustain initiatives to bless and serve the community in practical ways, so that people outside the church are blessed, experience the redemptive story of the gospel of grace, and become life-long followers of Jesus;
- Provide regular, credible opportunities to explore the Christian faith through Alpha, baptism and confirmation preparation, and other Christian basics courses;
- Express our solidarity with the poor by working with others for social justice, as we follow the example of Jesus in caring for people's whole lives - body, mind, and spirit;
- Do our part to care for God's creation, and reduce our impact on the environment.

4. Committed to One Another

To help us become more open to one another as an all-age church community, we will:

- Offer specific support to our church members *within* a variety of life-stages: e.g. children and families, young people, students, 20s and 30s, and seniors, as well as developing men's and women's ministries;
- Create opportunities for church members to support one another *across* the age groups, such as developing a mentoring network, and developing '*Sticky Faith*' as a concept to encourage inter-generational relationships between children, young people, and adults;
- Offer good pastoral care to one another, through home groups, the pastoral care team, prayer ministry, and providing practical help.

5. Committed to Others

We believe God is calling us to work in partnership with other churches, to share the resources God has given us for the furtherance of His kingdom. So we will:

- Actively seek opportunities to plant new congregations, in line with the Diocese of Blackburn's Vision 2026, to 'plant or renew 50 new strategic congregations by 2026.' We will do this in order to help establish more vibrant, confident, mission-minded Christian communities in the Lancaster and Morecambe area;
- Partner with other churches in Lancashire and Cumbria to create opportunities such as *New Wine Landmark* for worship, teaching, equipping, and encouragement, as well as opportunities for outreach to the city of Lancaster, such as the *Easter Festival*.
- Give our local, national and international mission partners a high profile in the life of the church through mission trips, prayers, and financial generosity.

6. Committed to Generosity

We believe God has called us to be open-handed and generous in response to His generosity to us. So we will:

- Practise regular and generous stewardship by giving sacrificially of our time, talents, and 'treasure' to support the ministry and mission of the church. We will hold an annual Stewardship Sunday to encourage financial generosity amongst church members;
- We will practice the Biblical principle of tithing by giving away 10% of all that we receive as a church through direct giving, in order to support the work of our mission partners;
- We will aim to complete a substantial building project by 2020 to renovate and develop our church buildings, as an investment in the next generation of ministry and mission at St Thomas' Church. This will only be possible through the open-handed and generous support of all our church members.

We cannot do this in our own strength:

**'but with God, all things are possible.'
(Matthew 19.26)**

2020 Vision



ST THOMAS
CHURCH LANCASTER
SHARING GOD'S LOVE FROM THE HEART OF THE CITY

Goals for 2015 - 2020