

VISION SUNDAY: All Saints Values and Direction.

Nov 20th 2022.

Colossians 1:9-20; Also Luke 23:33-43.

In November we take a service to share about our direction for the coming months – values and some activities to draw to your attention, the direction we believe that the head of the church – Christ – is leading us into and forward into.

Colosse is a Church that Paul did not found or plant. Epaphras did. But Colosse is a church plant.

All Saints is a church plant. We were planted on December 20th 2015 – so we are 7 years old next month. It only seems a moment to some of us...really, 7 years, we wonder...

Colosse are a Christian community, and one, he says, he has 'not stopped praying' for them.

What is he praying for the church plant.

What he prays:

that God would fill each of them with a knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

that each of them would live a life worthy of the Lord,

that each of them may please God, bearing good fruit in every good work,

That each of them would grow in the knowledge of God,

That each would be strengthened with all power according to God's glorious might,

He prays these things so that you may have great endurance and patience and that each, in that church, would joyfully give thanks to the Father who has enabled them to share in the Kingdom.

Paul is praying. Paul is desiring their ongoing growth. And in his closing words of chapter 4, he calls of them to devote themselves to pray, to

pray for a door to be opened for the gospel and to pray for him, and he shares how Epaphras is wrestling in prayer for them.

A church plant is a praying church - is what Paul communicates in his letter.

How do we want to work this out here?

1. Reminder of our weekly prayer email / app message – with a focus on All Saints and a global focus. If you do not receive it, please talk to Simon or Lici.

2. Prayer Ministry team – we just completed a training course. Prayer ministry is about the service of prayer – people praying alongside you, in privacy and confidence, in your joys and sorrows, over big things and small things. The team is available to pray every Sunday during Communion and after each service.

3. Prayer and Praise to become established once a month in the new year. First one on Nov 30th. Praise, in an informal style with blocks of songs, open to the workings and voice of the Holy Spirit, opportunities on how you can personally respond to the message, and times of intercession weaved into the service.

4. 5th Sunday – in the New Year, to return to that pattern we had before COVID – every fifth Sunday or in a month with 5 Sundays, to have a service of morning prayer with a strong focus upon prayer for our church life.

5. When you read Paul's letters, they often end with a list of people. I'd like us to try a new initiative from next Sunday until Christmas Day – to join me in praying for each member of our community – by name. We have roughly 168 adults and children who call All Saints their home. To break it down, to pray for each member by Christmas – 6 people a day, 28 days – an Advent challenge, where we pray for each person in our church community. I will send out a structure for praying. Only the name will be there – no prayer points and whether they are an adult or child. What to pray, is up to you... but Paul's

prayer from Colossians is a good place to start. Do it personally, do it as a family, we lift each other to the Lord.

I will mail out a list so you have a guide, and to know on that day, where your name is on that list, you are being prayed for. You know, it is a beautiful thing if we all get involved – it means when we come to your name, over 100 adults and children could be praying for you that day... and that is pretty cool.

Paul reminds us – the importance of the prayer life in the community.

What is a Planted Church.

Yet a planted church is what?

A community of saints Paul says ‘ who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints’.

All Saints – **we are all saints** – regardless of the background, education, nationality, gender, personality, age... there may be much that we can have different views over. Contemporary songs or traditional hymns; climate care and change; infant baptism or adult baptism; Communion every week or less often; what type of building we prefer to worship in; the best bible translation; Qatar World Cup, good or bad; Star Wars or Lord of the Rings! (of course there is only one answer to that last one!)

We can and are different. What unites us.
We are all saints.

How are we All Saints?

Through the blood of Christ.

“But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body, through death to present you holy in his sight ... if you continue in your faith, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.”

It is grace through faith we are saved. Our Life Groups are following Galatians at this time. Galatians is a reminder of grace – the glorious gospel of grace. Yet Galatians reminds us also of a trap – the Galatians

had slipped into and each of us can – where our discipleship becomes Christ plus – we are saved by grace and yet we somehow begin to feel that we are only saints or stay saints if we believe in Jesus and do stuff. I know for some of you, you have shared that this is a temptation you recognise. So our very name – as you come here, it reminds you All Saints – says you are a saint – a saint who sins yes but still a saint : the NT identity for you is a saint, not a sinner – A

We are all Saints – through blood of Christ, through grace, that is only how you are a saint and only how you remain a saint.

We are all saints

How are we all saints – grace – blood of Christ.

Called to live as saints.

In Colossians you have 2 chapters of theology you could say – in Christ – and then you have, 2 chapters of statements how to live as saints – in your streets, but also in your marriages, as parents, in your work. Paul shares the theology of what God has done and who you are, and now, how to live this out, to be a daily saint.

This is part of the vision of our life groups. Our Life Groups are fellowship and discipleship groups. These groups are more than study – it is a place where we share life, how it is daily living as saint. We celebrate the joys – rejoice with those who rejoice as Romans says. But also mourn with those who mourn. The problems and struggles. A place where we can share. And people will listen. And a place where they will pray with you and for you. So studying, sharing, praying. Life Groups are, to remind us, places where we are not only growing in knowledge, but growing how we live as saints. As DL Moody once said – “the Bible was not given to us to increase our knowledge but to change our lives.”

A planted church – Paul reminds us – is a community of saints.

A Planted Church is about three dimensions

Now, we say often we seek to have the core values at our centre – UP, IN, OUT. UP.

Jesus own ministry reflected that dynamic – UP his upward relationship with the Father, reflected so strongly in John, and the numbers of occasions we read in Matthew, Mark and Luke of Jesus setting aside time to pray. Jesus said in John 8 : I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence.'

IN – he formed a community – the 12 and more who were with him most of three years. Not just men, but women as well as particularly Luke and John remind us, like Mary Magdalene, Martha and Mary of Bethany. A community he was part of, as well as the crowds he ministered to. And disciple making – goes without saying, but as Dallas Willard reminds us: Jesus is Creator, Saviour, Lord and Teacher – he was the best and perfect teacher ever! We are to be his apprentices – learning from him day by day. Jesus is about making disciples.

OUT – he came into a broken sinful world. He reached out to those who did not know him who rejected him. He is seeking, inviting, welcoming, reaching out – even as he is dying, the criminal who is welcomed and each of us will meet in person someday. When the Pharisees criticise him for eating with sinners and tax collectors in Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables - lost sheep, lost coins, lost sons – Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

So Jesus shows up, in out. 3 dimensions.

Paul in his letter to Colossians shares his vision for a Church to be one of Up, In, Out.

He prays that they will joyfully give thanks to God – Up.

He celebrates their love for each other – Community – and he is teaching and praying for their growth as disciples – discipleship - IN.

And at the end of his letter, he invites them to pray for a door to be opened to the gospel – as the door had opened among them, and to pray for him, Paul, to have boldness to share where he is – OUT.

So Paul communicates an UP, IN, OUT vision for Colosse.

As individual saints we want to live 3DM lives – up, in out. And as a church we want to be a 3DM church – up, in out.

So to focus on our current and upcoming activities of church life and how it reflects those values...

Up –

We will return in January, to a regular All Age Service once a month. Online worship –as we shared in the newsletter – we are looking at moving from our pre-recorded worship, to live streaming on a Sunday. Abel and Rob are working on this concept. We will like to begin trying it out in the coming two weeks. Why Live stream?

There is a Need - there are people, within All Saints and further afield, who regularly watch our online worship. Explorers / Seekers. It allows those who are exploring faith, or to return to God, to ‘check us out’ – when you know no one or perhaps know many – it can be hard and a big step. To explore All Saints through online, or begin attending our online services can be an easier step. Time. It will save time for the editing team, both the time for recording and for editing.

The focus of the recording will be the stage – the sanctuary – and the screen. During Communion, a static image or the screen will only be shared. However peoples faces (readers, musicians, intercessors etc) – those involved in the service – will still be visible, as will any children who light the Easter candle. So we need to ask for consent – your permission – for your face or the face of your child to be seen on camera. We will share the form in the app and via email in the coming week. It is your choice – whether to give consent or not. If you are normally involved in a service and you do not want to give consent – that is okay. That will not affect your involvement. The team will work out an alternative slide or image when you are involved...

Preaching. From Advent Sunday – until Trinity Sunday – we are going to focus, in our preaching on the words and works of Jesus in the gospel set for that day. To hear what the Lord has to say to us.

From mid June until November, we will turn our preaching eyes to Jeremiah, the challenge of ministry in difficult times, a man who models honest determined faith, when many no longer believe; alongside Jeremiah that we will listen over those months to the entire letter of Revelation listening to how it connects to our unstable world, and with what Jeremiah experienced. Also from next week, each Sunday, we will hear words of the psalms each Sunday – so by next Advent, we will have heard words from each of the 150 psalms.

In – Caring for one another. As we read Acts, we see not only a community worshipping, praying, witnessing, discipling but also one that is caring. Acts 2 & 4 give us a beautiful example of Christians caring for those in need. These will be difficult times for many, with increasing costs at all levels of life. A community cares for each other. How can we be a community that cares for each other practically in these challenging times?

Discipleship. TTE – teach, transform, equip – a monthly evening, of study. It will cover a variety of topics relating to our discipleship – theological as well as practical. If it does not begin next month, it will begin in January. A chance to go deeper, to be taught, to be transformed, to be equipped as a disciple.

OUT.

Our Online Alpha Course is about to finish and it has been great. Alpha will continue to be something we offer. To offer both Online and in Person Alpha appears to be good. So in the late Spring, in May we will offer again an Online Alpha; and in September, we will offer an in Person, Live Alpha. A way to help those seeking to discover Christ.

We have mentioned already our aim, to work with Compassion, to help establish, by next July, a new Compassion Project in Rwanda for 150-300 kids.

I wanted to update you on Hilversum.

As you remember All Saints was approached to support a new church plant initiative, through practical help, financial admin, safeguarding, ecclesial – David Phillips, would be the minister in charge, and the congregation would be under All Saints structures – so Hilversum would be a congregation of All Saints. This structure is not new– Zwolle and Groningen Anglican churches are part of the Holy Trinity Utrecht chaplaincy.

Hilversum would seek to be self sustaining from the start – it would not look for any personnel or ministerial resources from us, and it would independent in terms of mission, ministry and worship strategy and approach. The ultimate aim is that Hilversum would become independent as a chaplaincy in 5 years.

There has been consultation with other chaplaincies – Amsterdam and Utrecht – as they neighbour this church plant. Our council received their thinking. We also invited feedback from you our community.

So last week, after prayer and discussion– we have decided to offer our support. We wait to hear what the Bishop’s next steps will be. But All Saints has offer to a new church plant in Hilversum, once it is formally launched by the Bishop.

In Colossians, Paul models to us, what our next steps are to be. Paul did not plant, and perhaps wasn’t involved too much in their mission, worship, strategy. But he prayed for them, he celebrated what God was doing and sought to be an encouragement to them. I think that gives us a great model on how to relate to the new work in Hilversum.

Conclusions.

Paul. We reflect on his words to Colosse.

The importance of Prayer

What is a Church Plant – it is All Saints.

A Church Plant has three dimensions.