

VISION SERIES 2022

Our future together



Wk 1

TODAY'S 9:45^{AM} SERVICE:

- Welcome
- Songs
- Confession
- Spotlight
- Bible Reading:
[1 Thes 2:17-3:13](#)
(Bible p.1186)
- Sermon
- Prayer
- Song
- Conclusion

If you are a visitor to our service please don't feel obliged to contribute financially.

Most St Stephen's collection is received electronically.
BSB: 062 272
Account Number:
00490436

Sunday 31 July 2022

Our 9:45am service is live streamed to our YouTube and Facebook Channels. If you don't wish to feature on our stream, please occupy the pews towards the back.

Welcome to St Stephen's. We're very glad to have you with us this week. We always love hosting new people and visitors. We'd like to get to know you so please say hi to one of our regulars, staff or welcomers and fill in the Connect Card (accessible through the QR Code).



Today we launch our annual Vision Series. We take time every year to refresh our sense of purpose and direction by looking at the Bible and applying it our local community. We want to be shaped by God's great plan and his attitude to the church. We want to take on his priorities and make them ours.

At the heart of God's plans and activity in the world is the local church. This is not what we expect. The church often makes mistakes. Christians often fail. Why would God put this group of people at the centre of his plans? Simply because he loves his church, he loves his people, and he invites all to be a part of his family. We hope you accept his invitation and enter the most blessed place on earth.

Prayers for the Service

These prayers are used during the service. Prayer is a privilege we are given because Christ died for us. His death & resurrection means we can confidently approach God seeking forgiveness (Hebrews 10:22). If you believe that Christ died to deal with your failings then you should be confident to pray with us. If you are still exploring who Christ is then feel free to listen in.

A Prayer of Confession

Lord God,
we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.
We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us
and restore us to the joy of your salvation,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:12

The Lord's Prayer

This is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray (Matthew 6:5-14).

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive
those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

Sermon Notes

The Priority of the Local Church | Passage: [1 Thes 2:17-3:13](#)

1. Mourning separation
2. Loving through sacrifice
3. The one who loves the church

Gospel and Prayer (GaP) Group Questions

1. What is competing for your time, attention and energy at the moment? How does that affect your approach to the family of believers in Willoughby?

Read 1 Thes 2:17-3:13

Getting your head around the passage:

Use as many questions as you need to ensure you understand the passage's contents.

1. Which phrases or words illustrate Paul's attitude about being separated from the Thessalonians?
2. Why does Paul feel this way about his separation?
3. What does Paul do in response to being separated from them?
4. Why do the Thessalonians bring Paul joy and encouragement?
5. To whom does Paul attribute the Thessalonian's spiritual state?

2. What is challenging about loving the local church?

“We’d rather be consumers of relationships—taking the parts we want and leaving out the parts we don’t—than face dealing with all of home’s demands (and benefits). And so, unfortunately, we scratch our heads and wonder why we can’t seem to find the kind of community experience we’re looking for, all the while remaining willfully adolescent in our relational habits.” Jesse Rice, *The Church of Facebook*

3. What do we lose if our relationships are superficial in the church context?

4. The church is described as Jesus's body (1 Cor 14), a branch of the true vine (John 15), a building with Christ as the cornerstone (1 Peter 2), the bride of Christ (Eph 5). What do these images tell us about Jesus's view of the local church?
5. How can you love the people of St Stephen's Willoughby more deeply over the coming months?



GaP Group Reflection

Watch the video provided to your group leader.

1. Who are you hoping to bring to Dumpling Night? How can you participate in this venture?
2. Pray God would bring 30 guests to Dumpling Night and over ½ of them would join us for the Simply Christianity Course that follows.

Prayer

1. Thank God for the encouragements you have received from the people of St Stephen's Willoughby.
2. Ask God to deepen our love for each other and increase our willingness to sacrifice for them and the Lord.

Read the Bible with us!

1. What do each of these extracts tell us about the responsibility and privilege of being part of God's church?
2. How can you adopt this in your life this coming day?

Monday - [Heb 10:24-25](#)

Tuesday - [Rom 12:4-5](#)

Wednesday - [Acts 2:46-47](#)

Thursday - [Col 3:15-16](#)

Friday - [Eph 2:19-20](#)

Notices

Vision Month Week - 1

Over the course of this month, we will refresh our sense of the vision God has for his church in Willoughby. We want this month to engage each member of the church. Here is how you can participate:



1. Attend a GaP Group each week to discuss the content and pray for each other and the wider St Stephen's family.
2. Attend our Prayer Night on Wednesday evening this coming week where we will pray for our church.
3. Commit to personally pray with an extra focus this month on our church family, its growth, its love for each other & the community, and the plans for the future.
4. Come to our celebration brunch/dinner on the final Sunday in August.
5. Share in the privilege of giving to our Link Missionaries as we celebrate Mission Gift Day on the final Sunday of the month.
6. Speak to staff about getting involved in some of the strategic initiatives we will talk about over the course of the month.
7. Bring a friend to experience the community of St Stephen's (especially at the Dumpling Making Night and the 'Simply Christianity' Course).

Newish Morning Tea

The next Newish Morning tea is on 21st Aug, straight after the 9:45 morning service. Keep your eyes open for more information. If you are new or newish to St. Stephen's we would love to see you there, so pencil the date into your diary.

Keyboard Training

Micah is running some music training this Sunday after the 9:45am service for anyone wanting to learn how to play the keys at church. It'll be interactive and fun. Duration - about an hour. Only basic keyboard/piano skills are required. Contact Micah at micah.beel@gmail.com if you're interested in coming this Sunday or for future training sessions.

Letter Box Drop

Our fliers for Dumpling Making Night are here. We'd love your help with the letterbox drop! Thank you to Judy Jarvis and Adrienne Riggs for organising this. Many came along to our Easter services because of our Easter letterbox drop. Pray for the same for Dumpling Making Night. The night is for adults, youth and kids—it's for everyone! After we make and eat the dumplings, there will be activities for youth (Yrs 5 upwards), kids, and adults to hear about Jesus. Dumpling Making Night is an easy invite—there'll be food and fun for all ages, plus a taster of how good Jesus is. Who could you bring along?



Simply Christianity

How good would it be if you brought someone to Dumpling Making Night, and they said afterwards, “I enjoyed the food and the people, but that Jesus you believe in—he’s fascinating. I can see how you would follow him. I’m interested in exploring more. I want to sign-up for Simply Christianity.” Simply Christianity starts the Friday night after Dumpling Making Night,

19th August, from 6:30pm to 8:30pm with food and drink.

Prayer Night.

“When God has something very great to accomplish for his church, it is His will that there should precede it, the extraordinary prayers of His people.” —Jonathan Edwards.

We're having a Prayer Night this Wednesday night. 3rd August, from 7:30pm to 8:30pm in the Chapel Hall. Join us to pray big, gospel-shaped prayers as nothing we plan to do can happen without God. On the other hand, because we have a big God, there's nothing too big, no vision too ambitious that God cannot do through us. Let's be a church that prays big prayers shaped by the gospel!



What's Coming Up

Monday 1st	Weekly Prayer Meeting - Zoom Link Meeting ID: 837 9111 9200 Passcode: qKga12
Tuesday 2nd	Playtime - Week 3 - Register
Wednesday 3rd	Prayer Night - 7:30-8:30pm - Chapel Hall
Friday 5th	Half Past Six - Week 2.
Saturday 6th	Prayer Morning 8:30-8:55am - Zoom Link Meeting ID: 878 2345 9321 Passcode: 836532
Friday 12th	Dumpling Making Night. Get Ticket
Sunday 14th	Dreaming & Planning Meeting No.1 for Evening Service
Sunday 28th	Celebration Brunch & Dinner + Mission Gift Day

Our Staff - Contact Us!



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