



St Stephen's

WILLOUGHBY
VISION SUNDAY

WE LONG TO BE A CHURCH MADE

beautiful, diverse and large

by the gracious work of Christ

Wk 1

Sunday 4 February 2024

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.

TODAY'S 9:45AM SERVICE

- Welcome
- Songs
- Spotlight
- Bible Reading:
Rev 7:9-12 (p. 1241)
& 1 Chron 17:1-6,
16-27 (p. 415)
- Sermon
- Prayers
- Lord's Supper
- Announcements
- Song
- Conclusion

Welcome to St Stephen's. We're glad to have you with us today. We would love to hear from you. Would you take a moment to fill in the Connect Card and let us know how you found church? You can also use the QR Code to access an electronic version.



This morning we kick off the church year with our Vision Sunday. A chance to rub the eyes, clear the vision and step out as God's church for another year. There are many good things a church can do. However, we want to ensure we spend our time doing the best things.

God sets a great picture of his church on the last day. From that promise we derive our purpose and direction. We want our life together to be a step on the way to what God promises to bring about - a church made beautiful, diverse and large.

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

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

Next Steps

Are you new? We would love to meet you. Hear a brief intro on the life of our church at our next [Newish Morning Tea](#) on Sunday 25 February. It runs for ½ an hour straight after the service.

Been regularly coming? If you are a regular member of our church, we encourage you to attend our next [Belonging Course](#) which runs on the 10th of March from 12-3pm. Belonging is the gateway to our GaP Groups, serving and deeper connection with the community.

Got a question? Fill out a [connect card](#) to chat with a staff member.

Prayers for those not sharing in Lord's Supper

Participation in the Lord's Supper is for those who have professed faith in Jesus - it's a powerful and important symbol of the Christian message. As such we want to encourage those who are still exploring the Christian faith to feel free to remain in their seats when others move to the front to receive the Lord's Supper. During that time you may want to reflect on the sermon or Bible reading. You may also want to pray one of these prayers below.

Prayer for those searching for truth

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open to me who you are. Give me an understanding of you that leads to the life that you promise. Amen.

Prayer of belief

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever before believed, but through you I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment on the cross, and offering forgiveness and new life. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Prayer for those struggling with sin

Lord Jesus, enable me to lay aside the sin that clings so closely, and run with perseverance the race set before me, looking to you, the pioneer and perfecter of my faith. Amen.

Prayers adapted from Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York.

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 forever
Amen

Sermon Notes

God's Vision for Us | 1 Chronicles 17:1-6 & 16-27; Revelation 7:9-12

Preacher: Prashanth Colombage

1. The Right Vision

2. Getting back on track

i. The Word of God

ii. Prayer soaked in Promises

3. The Surprise of God's vision

Gospel and Prayer (GaP) Group Study

This study is for groups who will meet in addition to attending the week of prayer. All groups are encouraged to come to the church and pray with others on the night of the group's meeting this week. Prayer times will run from 7:30-8:30pm onsite Monday to Friday.

1. What purpose has the local church served in your life and the world around you? How has that influenced your thinking about the purpose of the local church?

Read Revelation 7:9-12

Getting your head around the passage:

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

- A. What things does John see in the vision?
- B. What does he hear?
- C. What are they doing?
- D. What are they wearing?
- E. What does the crowd, the sounds, sights, actions, and clothing symbolise?

2. If Revelation 7 is a glimpse of the church God has committed to build, what is surprising and/or encouraging to you from this insight?

3. If we (as a local church) are a stepping stone to this ultimate reality, what might we hope to see happen in our midst?

4. What fears, doubts, distractions tend to discourage you from this vision of the ultimate church and the local church?

“When God in so remarkable a manner took the work in his own hands, there was as much done in a day or two, as at ordinary times, with all the endeavours that men can use, and with such a blessing as we commonly have, is done in a year.” – Jonathan Edwards

5. How can refocussing on God through his word and in the discipline of prayer give us optimism for the purpose of the local church? How can it remove distractions and deal with our fears?

6. How can the prayer life of your group change this year to be soaked in God’s promises?

Prayer Time

1. Reflect on the vision statement of our church, Rev 7:9-12 and spend time praying for God’s blessing on the ministry of St Stephen’s this year.
2. Ask God to give you a growing love for his local church and his purpose for the local church.

Read the Bible with us!

Prepare for our Matthew Series by catching up on what we read through over the Christmas New Year period.

1. What is Matthew teaching us about Jesus?
2. What gives you reason to give thanks?
3. How can this passage shape your prayers today?

Monday – [Matthew 1:1-17](#)

Tuesday – [Matthew 1:18-25](#)

Wednesday – [Matthew 2:1-12](#)

Thursday – [Matthew 2:13-23](#)

Friday – [Matthew 3:1-17](#)

Notices

Prayer week



This coming week we encourage every person at St Stephen's to join us in the great and holy task of prayer.

Each weeknight we will meet in the Chapel Hall from 7:30-8:30pm to pray for the world, the spread of the gospel and our church.

There is no more effective way to bring about personal and corporate change than to commit to prayer.

GaP Groups are highly encouraged to attend the prayer night corresponding to their usual day/night of meeting. While it is tempting at this time of year to skip prayer – we encourage you there are few better ways to prepare for all that will come.

GaP Groups

Our GaP Groups are excellent spaces for you to soak yourself in the promises of God and shape your prayer life accordingly.

They provide a regular time of encouragement, grounded in the Bible's solid hope. The community you experience in a group will enrich your spiritual life and help you shape not only your vision for church but all of life.

If you have not joined a group but you are interested please use the Connect Card or speak to Prash. We are looking to start a couple of new groups this year.



Notices

Kids and Youth Ministries are back on

Praise God for a great start to the year for Friday Kids and Half Past Six. It was great to see old and new faces. This term at Friday Kids we are looking at 'who is Jesus' and 'what did he come to do'. At Half Past Six we are looking at a 'dozen disappointing disciples'. How God uses ordinary people to change the world. Both groups are great places for young people who are exploring faith to ask questions and learn more about Jesus.



Playtime starts back this Tuesday the 6th Feb.

Who can you bring along?

Serving

Our 4th mission priority is Celebrating Together for the Glory of Christ. We are a church that values our time together. We see it as a shadow of the great and final picture in the Bible when God will gather all his people from all ages, cultures and languages together. Unlike a world built on individualism, the church is a community of grace and encouragement.

We seek to build people up and point them to Christ. We want each other to be more like Jesus!



One of the primary ways we express our life together is in serving each other. We value service.

As the year kicks off you have the opportunity to join a Sunday Service team. Service teams are great ways to bless others, encourage fellow team members and grow spiritually. Check out the short description of various Sunday Service ministries and consider signing up to one.

What's Coming Up

5-9 February	Week of Prayer
6 February	SRE Conference
11 February	GaP Group Leaders Meeting
18 February	Baptism Sunday
18 February	Music, Kids & Welcoming training

For more on what's happening this summer at St Stephen's, visit st-stephens.com.au/summer

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