

11am HC – St Oswald's Rugby  
11 September 2011

Acts 1:1-11

**Martin**  
**Introduction**

The book of Acts is a great story in which we can read about the life of the early church with all the richness of its challenges:

- Arguments and advances
- Disagreement and disillusionment
- Growth and division
- Miracles and frustrations

This morning we are looking to the future and I am struck by the parallels between the early church and the church today.

The story of the Early Church begins with Jesus warning the first Christians against presumptive or precipitate action – and he tells them “yes you are going to be my witnesses not only to the Jews but to the whole world, but before you start you need to pause, you need to wait, until you receive the power of the Holy Spirit”.

After they waited comes the story of Pentecost which you can read in Chapter 2 and which we are unpacking over the coming weeks – but I want to hold onto that idea of “waiting” as Jackie and I share something about the church today.

Jackie & I have been going through a period of waiting and personal reflection over many months. I am 60 next January 2012 and I am due to retire in just over 5 years, January 2017. We have been in Rugby 21 years in November and we have been asking questions about whether it is right for us, and right for m2o, for us to stay, or whether we should move and make way for new leadership.

The changes we have had to negotiate and obstacles we have had to overcome in recent years as a church have been incredible. Most people find any change difficult and we have had many! During this time there has been less sense of direction and moving forward, and I have not given enough attention to that sense direction, this may also have been related to my own uncertainties about the future.

After our time of waiting, Jackie and I now have a sense that, barring something unforeseen, we will be here until the end of 2016 as the leaders of m2o. It is important that this is not a period of drift but one in which we make significant decisions and move forward together as the people of m2o.

I am also conscious that in this same next five year period there are other major staffing changes due – Liz and Roger plan to retire from the Church Office at some stage; Alan will retire by March 2014, Tim finishes his time with us in March 2014 and Sheila will finish her time with us by mid-2014. All these will have a significant impact upon us!

Today Jackie & I are setting out something of what we believe God wants us to focus on over the next 5 years or so and to recover that dynamic of clear leadership.

I sense another factor which has led to a lack of clarity in leadership and direction has been the increase in pastoral staff. This is not a criticism of the staff but I have not always ensured with the new energy, ideas and initiatives they bring, that they fit well within the overall direction, values, culture and ethos of m2o.

This has given some of our people a sense of insecurity and drift; and to others a sense of division. I don't share that sense myself, but I recognise that it is how some people feel. I am clear that I need to give a clearer lead over the next five years to mitigate these feelings.

Jackie and I want to re-affirm the purpose of m2o in our Mission Statement, and we are setting out some clear directions for mission and ministry for the future, consistent with this and our current priorities. These will enable m2o to re-build morale and to consolidate after this extended period of significant change, change which must not be underestimated, and so to be best placed to move forward into the next period of leadership from 2017.

Just to remind us, our Mission is:

*To reach out to unchurched people and turn them into  
a community of mature disciples who worship Jesus and serve others.*

The areas we believe need to be addressed can be divided into three:

1. Building Church Life (that is the "community of mature disciples" in our Mission Statement)
2. Digging Deeper Into the Wider Community (that is the community we are reaching out to)
3. Functional Aspects (that is things like finance, buildings and organisation)

The first and second are the most important being concerned with what the church is to be and what the church is to do, but the third is also essential, and in some cases urgent and critical, to release us for effective mission and ministry.

Jackie will now share something of our thinking about Building Church Life and Digging Deeper into the wider community.

### **Jackie**

#### **1. Building Church Life**

The first priority of the PCC a year ago (in September 2010) was the need to see a renewal of confidence and a raising of morale within St. Matthew's congregation, along with giving a clear trumpet call of clear and consistent leadership. With the significant changes since then – the move to St. Oswald's and the closure of St. Matthew's, this is still the major priority and now, right across the whole of m2o.

We believe we need to renew our sense of community with values of interdependence, mutual trust and support, with confidence in one another and the Gospel.

We will pursue the following initiatives for completion by the end of 2012.

- A. Remembering the value of 40 Days of Community 4 years ago we plan to hold another campaign "40 Days in the Word" for the whole of m2o in Lent 2012
  - This is a unifying programme of spiritual development and community action with similar elements to the previous campaign.
  - This focuses on helping us learn together how to be not only a "hearers" of the Word, but also a "doers" of God's Word.
  - It will be a major initiative taking priority over other programs or initiatives during this period.
- B. Pastoring the disaffected
  - Many have been unsettled with the changes of recent years; some have stopped coming, some attend less regularly.
  - We want to identify and encourage them
  - Take the pulse of m2o
- C. St. Oswald's congregation has experienced significant decline primarily and sadly through the death of a number of members. Despite the investment of significant

resources of people power into the 9am congregation we have not seen the growth we had hoped and prayed for.

- Martin, Glenn and Alan need to continue to work on how best to serve this congregation and review the options to support them.
- D. Helping St Matthew's folk feel more at home – St. Oswald's is "our" new home not a temporary location.
- November 6 will be significant with the final service at SMR and Rededication of St Oswald's – we have some ideas to mark this occasion. Put it in your diary etc etc
- E. New Wine has played a significant role in building community and we plan to promote this better for 2012 to enable more to share in this experience.
- F. Appointment of Ministry Leaders for: Discipleship; Community; Service and Small Groups
- G. Focus energies on our work with children and youth to give it clearer leadership and develop this vital ministry.

## **2. Digging Deeper into the Wider Community**

Our mission is to reach out to the wider community wherever we engage with it, but we have a particular responsibility to the communities within our parish.

Significant progress has been made on Overslade and links have been built across the community of New Bilton. But we need to dig in and be involved in the local communities of our parish if we are to earn the right to be heard. Building on what has already been achieved will help us to be more effective in taking this further and we hope to foster these in particular in the next 18 months:

- A. Use links made at the schools to run "Family Time" and the "Marriage Course"
- these scratch where people itch
  - can be precursors to Alpha
  - Involve people who have done it before
- B. m2older ministries like PiTStOP – are beginning to be established, we need build on these
- C. Build on Messy Church and Kids Club on Overslade are really significant.
- We want to develop other relevant "serving" ministries e.g. CAP Money
- D. Arrange strategic dates for Community Action Days
- E. Build on what has been achieved with Encounter to ensure it serves the unchurched people of New Bilton.

**Martin**

## **3. Functional**

Finally we have some really important practical, functional, issues to face:

- A. We have run a large deficit in each of the recent years, we must eradicate this and establish a firm financial footing by end 2012

One way to do this is to increase giving – but this is already high and we are doing well even with fewer people. Thank you!

Another way is to decrease spending on ministry and mission – but we have already done this significantly, any further reductions would make it very difficult for people to do the things we are asking them to do and would not be enough to cover the deficit anyway.

The only other option which I believe we must pursue is to reduce our pastoral staffing. This would mean that when Tim leaves we would not replace him and that some of the money saved could be used to employ a full-time Youth & Children's Pastor.

I have shared this with Tim and he is fully supportive of these proposals.

- B. With the retirement of Roger & Liz at some point, two highly valued senior members of staff in our Office, we need to start making plans for the future of the Office to ensure it is able to continue to provide the high level of service it provides now. The PCC begin this process next week.
- C. Providing on-site facilities for children's work and the Church Office by early 2012 – we have been actively pursuing this for some months.

We tried to get temporary classrooms – but we've not been allowed to do this. We are planning some building work but this is long term & expensive.

We are currently looking at using the old St. Oswald's Vicarage – this is a very viable option and something we can do relatively quickly – it can also be part of our long-term solution. We are pursuing this with vigour and also see it as a replacement for the Church Centre – and would be funded from the sale of the Church Centre - this comes to the PCC next week. I hope we can be open for business in early 2012.

- D. Improve this building to provide adequate facilities for Sunday worship and community use. There are various plans the PCC are considering next week to provide additional space, seating, toilets etc. These need to be phased with:
  - i) A. Enlarging worship area by creating doors in the glass panels by mid 2012
  - B. Flexible hall extension by end 2013 configured to provide choice of:
    - i. Two rooms
    - ii. Single hall
    - iii. Large entrance vestibule circulation area
  - ii) A. Enlarged kitchen
  - B. Additional toilets/storage by end 2015
  - i) Further decisions about plans for south extension for additional seating/kitchen and storage to be made by early 2016
- E. By consolidating on this site we can both rationalise our building stock and raise significant funds for these proposals.

## **Conclusion**

These things we have shared will become the agenda for the next 5 years – there is clearly room to add to them or to adapt them, particularly in the first two areas – Building Community Life and Digging Deeper into the Wider Community, beyond 2012, but the fundamental thrust has to be maintained and we hope that the contribution of others will enhance them.

But that fact is none of this will happen without your support and commitment as the family of m2o. We believe we stand at a significant crossroads in the life of m2o – not just for us but for our whole family and we want to invite you to show your commitment to this vision and this family.

## **The Next Five Years – 2011 to 2016 - 5**

Will you stand with us to commit yourself to building our community life and digging deeper into the wider community?

Will you stand with us to commit yourself to reaching out to unchurched people and being part of a community of mature disciples who worship Jesus and serve others?

Will you stand with us to commit yourself to one another as m2o, as together we seek to be the people God calls us to be?

If you will, please stand with us now as Jackie leads us in prayer.

Martin & Jackie Saxby

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