

West Kirby United Reformed Church



Our Church's Vision
September 2015



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Introduction

We live in exciting times! We are a Church on the move!

I get the impression that our congregation here in West Kirby has always been one which has sought the mind and heart of God for its life and vision together. We want to be the people that God calls us to be, and do the work and witness of God here where He has placed us. I certainly got that impression when reading the Church profile, on meeting the Elders, the Staff Team and you as a congregation, and that was the mandate on which I came to work alongside you as Minister. We will be a Church that takes its mission in its local community seriously.

For over a year now, the Elders, Staff Team and I have been seeking God's voice and guidance for this next stage on our journey together as His people. We've prayed together and separately, we've been away together and we've sought and listened for the mind of Christ to lead us forward.

The time has come to share our new vision statement and to explain a little more about it, and to share again West Kirby United Reformed Church's 'Statement of Purpose' which the Elders, Staff Team and I have prayed over and reflected on and have chosen to retain, with only some minor amendments.

Vision Statement

The vision of West Kirby United Reformed Church is: to grow a relevant, Christ-like Church that serves our community

That sounds quite simple a statement in some respects. However, behind it there is a depth of thought and purpose. It builds on (but does not exclude) our vision to "Introduce Jesus to People" by being intentionally missional and evangelistic.



Key Terms

“Grow”

We don't want to be a Church that stays where it is. The people of God has always been a pilgrim people, on a journey under God's guidance to where He leads us. We unashamedly want growth: growth in all areas of life; in maturity and faith; in understanding and discipleship; in worship; in servanthood; in wholeness and healing; in relationships; in numbers; in attitudes and spiritual disciplines, and in people made new in Christ.

Where things stop growing, stagnation happens. We don't want to stay as we are, we want more growth for God's glory. God grows the seeds that are planted and we want to play our role in nurturing those seeds by being obedient to what He would have us do and where He would have us go.

“Relevant”

The dictionary describes relevant as *“bearing on or connected with the matter in hand; closely relating to the subject or point at issue; pertinent to a specified thing.”*

Relevant can be a buzz word and can be misunderstood, but we have used it intentionally. The Gospel is relevant to every person, to every tribe, tongue, age and nation, and therefore it is relevant to West Kirby!

We see a Church that is relevant as a Church that is connected. A relevant Church is able to read our culture through Kingdom eyes and help make sense of that through gospel thinking, through the opening, loving and obeying of God's word in Scripture.

What is relevant to our youngest Church member may not be for our oldest so we will endeavour to be real, appropriate and authentic to all we work with. We will seek to love each

person who enters our doors and to help them understand the call of Christ in ways that make sense to them. Bridges are Christ in ways that make sense to them. Bridges are connecting points that help people cross and we have very much had the sense that we are called to be like a bridge – we want to help people cross over and find Jesus.

“Christ-like”

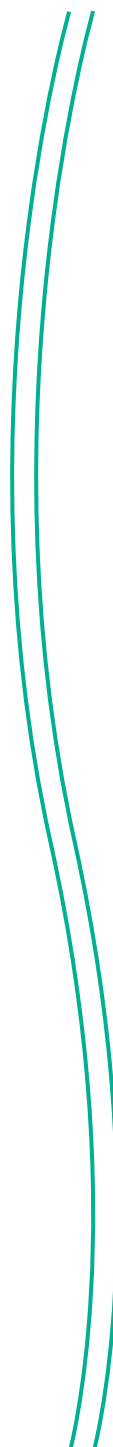
As disciples, we sit at the feet of Christ who we want to model our lives on, and we do this as a Church too.

A Christ-like Church has its eyes turned towards our Father God and is connected to the Holy Spirit. It worships in Spirit and in truth, and its worship therefore sustains our daily living as disciples. A Christ-like Church welcomes all and values each person as someone made in the image of God, purposed to know and be known by God. A Christ-like Church recognises that it is made up of broken people who are on a journey to restoration. A Christ-like Church values individual and corporate prayer. A Christ-like Church challenges, encourages and walks beside one another in honesty and in accountable relationships. A Christ-like Church is united, it is generous and it is humble. A Christ-like Church loves, even when that is hard. A Christ-like Church is a reflection of Jesus – who blessed others, who gave generously and who lived with passion and purpose.

“Community”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “the Church is the Church only when it exists for others.” We are a missional congregation, we exist for other than ourselves.

Our Church is placed in the community of West Kirby and we are called to serve and love West Kirby, to pray for this community and to seek its well-being. We do that by using our buildings as places of welcome and learning where needs are met and authentic relationships are created.



Although the majority of our current congregation reside within West Kirby, we all have our own communities. Our community is where we are called to share our love and live out our faith in our homes, families, workplaces and recreational places. We all have our own ‘frontlines’ where we can make contacts and build relationships. We live out our Christian faith by sharing among our own circles of life. We serve our community by sharing Christ’s love with them. It is the job of the “priesthood of all believers”, the whole Church from the youngest to the oldest to do this.

I hope that you will join the Elders, Staff Team and I in thanking God for the vision He has given us. Our task now is to work to inhabit this vision faithfully. To God be the glory in this Church and in our lives.

Rev. Louise Franklin – September 2015

Moving Forwards

The first thing we will be doing to help us to explore how to apply our vision will be sharing in the following sermon series at both the morning and evening services:

- Sunday 6 September – Grow a Relevant Church
- Sunday 13 September – Grow a Christ-like Church
- Sunday 20 September – Grow a Church that Serves the Community

Following this series, the Staff Team will begin to visit and work with the Church’s various groups to help them to consider how the vision statement applies to them and how they can express the vision over the year ahead.

From the week beginning 21 September, every fellowship group will be participating in the Frontline course, a six session course in personal evangelism. Everyone is welcome to

join a fellowship group. Please contact Kath Hilborne if you would like more information on which group might suit you.

Beginning in mid-October will be a series of talks in the morning service on what it means to be a Christ-like Church, and a series of talks in the evening service on who God is, how He works in us and how we take this Good News into our community.

The Statement of Purpose

The Elders and Staff Team prayed and reflected on the Church's long-standing document, 'Statement of Purpose and Explanatory Notes' and have chosen to keep this with only some minor amendments.

**Under the guidance of God
and in the power of His Holy Spirit**

our purpose is

to know, love and serve God

and

**to share the good news of Jesus Christ with our communities
in relevant ways**

**so that together, through God's grace,
we grow as committed disciples of Jesus Christ,**

**worshipping Him, receiving His love, forgiveness,
healing and salvation,**

being filled with His Spirit and working for His Kingdom.

Explanatory Notes for the Statement of Purpose

Italics are used to highlight phrases contained in the Statement of Purpose

The starting point from which our purposes can be worked out:

“Under the guidance of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit”

The work of West Kirby United Reformed Church is, essentially, God’s work. We are under His authority to do it. This means:

1. That underlying everything we do must be a consistent individual and corporate prayer-life. Our prayer needs to be dynamic interaction with God, which is the responsibility of every Church member. When we meet to pray we should be seeking to put ourselves in line with God’s revealed purposes. In particular the Elders carry responsibility to pray for the Church.
2. That we need to be consistently subjecting the work of the Church to the scrutiny of the Bible, since this is a primary way in which God guides His Church. To do this effectively, we need to be consistently engaged in learning what God says in the Bible.
3. That we will have an openness to the Holy Spirit in using the whole range of gifts which He gives to the Church for its growth and mission. Our intention is to ensure that these gifts are used in a Biblically balanced way.

The basic statements of purpose:

“To know, love and serve God”

Jesus told us that the greatest commandment is “to love the

Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength” so this has to be central to our purposes. Our Church needs to be a community whose members are committed to God and where we help each other to grow in our knowledge, love and service of God.

“To share the good news of Jesus Christ with people around us in relevant ways”

Allied to the greatest commandment is the second: “to love your neighbour as yourself”. We believe that it is only by turning to Jesus Christ that people can be forgiven their sins and have a full relationship with God. Therefore, the most loving thing that we can do as Christians is to show people that need, and show them the fruit of lives lived for Jesus. However, because we live in a world where many people think that the Church is irrelevant to their lives (and therefore Christians have little of value to say) we need to find ways of breaking down this barrier so that people experience the gospel lived out as well as having it explained to them. We are committed to loving and befriending people and finding common ground so that when the gospel is presented they will see its relevance to their own lives and see the need to turn to Christ in repentance and faith. Growing out of our love for our community is our desire to serve it in practical and spiritual ways.

The basic outcome of fulfilling this purpose:

Is that there will be *growth* as people become Christians and as together the Church mature into *committed disciples of Jesus Christ*.

Fulfilling this purpose shows in

1. Worshipping Him

Worship is interaction with God, deliberate placing of ourselves in situations where we can consciously offer our love and praise to Him, both individually and together.



2. Receiving His love, forgiveness, healing and salvation

We believe that God wants people to be made whole. People need to know they're loved by God. We aim to make the atmosphere of this Church one where people can be honest, open and gracious with one another because they are secure in God's love.

The biggest need that sinful human beings have is forgiveness. We get that only by accepting Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Once we do that, when we ask for God's forgiveness we can be sure that Jesus has already taken the punishment for our sins and God forgives us because of that. That helps us to start again and to put different habits in our lives that lead away from sinning. The proof of meeting our purpose in this respect is whether people are becoming Christians and whether they are willing to be open and honest about sin with others in the Church without coming under human condemnation.

We believe that God heals - physically, mentally and spiritually. If we are fulfilling our purposes, people will be wanting to thank God for healing and there will be ready testimonies to it.

Salvation - being saved - is about accepting Jesus as Lord and moving from a place where we will be separated from God when we die to a place where we will be received into God's presence when we die. But it's also about being saved from a life which only has a worldly purpose to having a life where every action can make a difference for the Kingdom of God - what the Bible calls "abundant life". The measure of this isn't just a matter of waiting to see who's in heaven when we get there! We can trust God's word that when we are born again we start working for Him, it'll result in changed lives now.

3. Being filled with His Spirit

God's word encourages us to be continually filled with His Holy Spirit. If we ask, He will fill us. Sometimes we will feel it, sometimes we won't, but there is a qualitative difference in our response to God when we are filled with His Spirit.

4. Working for His Kingdom

This is measurable fairly simply - are we eager to bring Jesus' teaching to bear on every part of our life? If we are, people will notice the quality of our life together and particularly the quality of our witness to others. Are the values we have different enough from the values of the world that people can recognise the difference?

Amended September 2015

Any Questions?

If you would like to talk to someone about the information contained in this booklet, or if you have any questions, a good person to start with would be your Elder or a member of the Staff Team.

Currently the Elders are:

Mark Bainbridge, Peter Hamer, Rob Jackson, Jimmy Lindsay, Rosemary Shaw, Colin Usher, Jenny Usher, Gordon Wilson, Liz Wilson and Tony Wilson.

The Staff Team are:

Rev. Louise Franklin, Kath Hilborne and Dan Sach.

