



Spring 2017 – **ProVision**

(1 John 3:1-3 & James 2:14-17, 5 February 2017, Paul Langham)

Note

If you were not in church on Sunday 5 February, and you are a member of the church family, please collect your ProVision pack on your next visit. Thank you.

Readings

1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. **3** All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. 1 John 3:1-3

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? **15** Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. **16** If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? **17** In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:14-17

Introduction

I have recently come to the conclusion that I am not mad ...

Or at least, if I am mad, I am in good company – listening to our recent visiting speakers (Philip Jinadu from Woodies; Oliver Home, our Diocesan Secretary; Kris Vallotton from Bethel Church in California; Marvin Rees, our City Mayor), I realize even more strongly that the Lord is re-awakening Christians and churches across the globe to a new focus on Kingdom – to see the church not as an escape pod for the 'righteous' but as a spiritual powerhouse for the transformation of culture.

I am so grateful to God to be alive, in church leadership and in Bristol at such a time. Leader after leader across this City are speaking the same language, teaching the same biblical truth, seeking not 'kingdom' with a small 'k' but seeking together to grow THE Kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

Never doubt that a small group of people who care deeply enough can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. Margaret Mead

God's vision has always combined the individual with the global – 2 examples

Abraham – 1 The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2 'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those

who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’ Genesis 12:1-3

The disciples – ‘... But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ Acts 1:8

Our Vision

**is to play our part in growing the Kingdom of God
in Clifton, Bristol and beyond**

So what is the Kingdom of God?

Quite simply, it is wherever God reigns, where people acknowledge who he is and respond accordingly.

If we look for the perfect Kingdom of God in the bible, we find it in 3 places

1. Historically – In Eden
2. Prophetically – in the New Jerusalem
3. Historically and currently – in the person of Jesus

Specifically, where Jesus is Present, the Kingdom of God comes near, and people pursue it, for it is the place where what is impossible for us becomes possible.

Think of this

Where	Jesus	is
	Present	
People	Pursue	him

That is why we make such a priority of

Pursuing the
Presence of
Jesus

For that is where we find the Kingdom of God growing.

Don't for a moment imagine that this is an internal, even selfish, activity. When we allow the Kingdom of God to grow within us, it cannot but have a transformative impact around us. The Kingdom within us becomes the Kingdom around us.

How did Jesus bring or carry the Kingdom of God?

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit ... Luke 4:1

What was the experience of his followers?

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:4

What is the promise to those who follow today?

... be filled with the Spirit ... Ephesians 5:18

What does 'full' mean? It's one of those words that can only mean what it says – full is full. It means there is no measure of capacity left in whatever vessel is being described.

Scripture promises that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus was.

What comes from this? Among other things,

1. Identity
2. Authority

The name 'George' could mean anyone – my maternal grandfather, for example.

But 'Prince George' can only mean one person. His identity and (later in this human analogy) his authority, comes from his relationship with the man who will be king.

Our identity and authority come from our relationship with the man who has become king and who one day will return to be revealed fully as king of kings and lord of lords.

Our values (which I'm not going to detail here, but which can be found on our website) have been chosen as reflecting what we see of the character of the Kingdom of God in scripture.

I will return to one of those values shortly.

Turning Vision into Reality

In 2017, we have 4 ways in which we seek to turn our Vision into reality (more details are given in the ProVision packs)

1. Daniel's Windows – an invitation to the whole church family to pursue the presence of Jesus daily together, wherever we are (see separate leaflet – details will also come with the weekly email)
2. Kingdom Living – practical teaching to help us grow the Kingdom wherever we are (see flyer for details)
3. The Spire Coffee Shop – already up and running. Can you help with a weekly shift or half-shift? Please contact the office ...
4. The appointment of a full-time youth worker to help our teenagers pursue the presence of Jesus and grow the Kingdom of God

Our response – financial support

For 2017 the PCC has set a faith budget of £638,000, an increase of £90,000 compared to 2016. Big ticket items in this budget include

- increasing our Diocesan Parish Share contribution to £210,000 (an increase of £28,000 compared to 2016) and
- the appointment of a full-time Youth Pastor (salary circa £25,000 pa).

To meet this budget we are looking for the church family to increase giving income for 2017 to £420,000 (this is an increase of £34,000 compared with what was given during 2016).

Our two readings highlight one of our core values as a church family – generosity. This is how God’s love is seen and experienced: he loves so he gives. There is always a concrete expression to God’s love; it is never airy or insubstantial ...

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are!*

‘See’, says John. God’s generosity is something we can look at, experience and wonder at. It’s a lavish generosity, making us his children, royal princes and princesses with all the implications for identity and authority we considered earlier.

James encourages a similar generosity in our own financial dealings.

ProVision is our annual stewardship campaign, and gives us the opportunity to respond to God’s lavish generosity with our own generous giving.

In your **ProVision** pack, you will find a letter addressed to you personally, if you are a member of the church family.

As vicar, I know nothing of what people give – only 2 or 3 ever see details of giving. But I am told that around 75% of those who give regularly to Christ Church have not increased their giving for the past 4 or 5 years. If that is you, may I urge you to pray about that this year. If everyone made even a small increase to their giving, the impact would be wonderful.

Some of you are members here but haven’t yet started giving. May I invite you prayerfully to respond to our Vision with your giving?

No one will ever try to tell you what to give – only the Lord can do that. I firmly believe that as we pursue the presence of Jesus, he will show us how to respond.

We acknowledge that there are some for whom giving financially is difficult. Please do not feel under any human pressure to give financially – all we ask is that you pray and ask the Lord what he wants you to do.

We’d be grateful to have your **ProVision** forms back as quickly as possible – whether you are increasing or decreasing your giving, or leaving it the same, our finance team need all the information they can get, to help them plan and steward our finances faithfully.

On behalf of the whole leadership here at Christ Church ...

... Thank you!

Paul Langham, February 2017