

Meadgate Church AGM Vicar's Address

Be Joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:16.

When Moses used to meet with the Lord in the tent of meeting outside the camp he said these words to God, 'If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so that I may know you.....'

Well now the wonder of God's Church is that no one may wonder who the Lord, is or what he desires for us, because by the Holy Spirit within we can all know him. He is the Spirit who has joined himself with our spirits and animates and directs our life together. And we can all know in the broadest terms what God wants for us. None among us need say, 'I don't know what God wants for my life. I don't know what he wants me to do.' Because Paul in writing to the Church in Thessalonica gives us what God wants. *Be joyful always, Pray continually, Give thanks in all circumstances.*

Simply put but difficult to do perhaps.

Joyful always

To be joyful is about calling – to know ourselves set apart for the purposes of God, and living those purposes out. And it doesn't always mean that we will be happy. In fact at times it means we will be profoundly unhappy. Jesus, for the joy set before him, endured the cross. That was his calling. Not a happy thing for him to be crucified. But it did fulfil his life.

And for anyone in Christ to be joyful means entering into the fullness of life that means that we are passionate about living for him. It means we experience the full gamut of happiness and sorrow. It means we have hope always. Our Meadgate Church is a community of hope even when we weep, or struggle, or find life together hard. We are the God community here in this neighbourhood living the joy of Jesus. We belong together, we are working out God's purposes here together, we are joyful together as we enter into the work of God in this place.

So I want to tell you about the joy of being on the PCC. Disagreement, confusion, worry, responsibility, wishing you were somewhere else. That is a truth. But it's all part of Joy. The other side of it is agreement, clarity, achievement and glad to be involved. Each of the PCC members bring their gifts to the table for us to work well together in discerning God's specific purposes for us in Meadgate Church. Meadgate Church more than many churches know this truth and is brave enough to face the challenges of change and renewal. We are going through such a time. And praise God for the prophets, visionaries and pastors in Meadgate Church who have seen the vision and enabled it to happen.

Well Pray for our PCC. We had a meeting in March at which we decided to move to four PCC meetings a year. Four key deciding moments in the year when there will be big things to talk over. Alongside this will be the Ministry leadership team which have eight meetings a year to talk over the more detailed aspects of the church's day to day ministry not all PCC members. It will be made up of members of the church who lead various bits of ministry. Music, prayer pastoral, young people and so on. They will talk about things like how worship fits together, when to have particular events so they don't clash and so on. If there are major decisions to make or ideas that cost a lot of money they will go to the PCC for deciding. And then there will be other sub groups of the PCC. Standing committee, Finance group, Buildings, Evangelism, world mission are obvious ones to have.

It is expected that PCC members will take their place on one of those groups as well as being on the main committee but also it is hoped that other members of the Church might agree to be on such a sub group of the PCC to bring their wisdom to the issues to be addressed. That is a kind of plan so we

can make decisions well. And I tell you this because the joy is about living together as God's people. And the PCC is there so that we can live well together as the particular people of God. If there is no Church as God's community of faith, then there is no Christian faith.

Two other things about the joy of being God's community together I want to tell you about are that the Orchards Coffee shop and Soft play facility are now open until 1pm during the week. It's a lovely place to be for your morning coffee which is the best in town at the lowest price and a great place to invite your friends. Alongside this now is also running children's centres parent group, the Baby Clinic, a Moo music movement and dance event, a parent aid counselling service, a support4sight afternoon for sight impaired children, the city councillors have a surgery here and coming soon a NHS health improvement School Issues Drop in service for families, and hopefully MIND will be running an event also. Together with that lot are our own in-house things. I have been running a Wednesday morning Bible teach in, Chris and Emma have been running a parenting course, and soon Toni and Kirsty are beginning an opportunity for families in need to connect in, and on the 19th May we are having an event called 'Gravetalk' to provide a place where people can talk openly about dying, grief and funerals. It's all part of the fulfilment of the vision of reconciling and supporting families in this place. But we could do with your help. In volunteering and in meeting members of our neighbourhood who might find their way further into the church as God's community. Or just come and buy the coffee – It's great!

The other thing is that we have left unfinished the painting up and fixing a few things in this building particularly at the far end of the corridor. And so Tom Warmington is organising a maintenance morning on Saturday 28th May. I hope you will help with that work if you are able. More information will be coming out about it.

These things are the joy of our life together. The fullness of life that is all things done as God's kingdom community.

Pray continuously

Having told us to live joyfully Paul tells us to pray continuously. The things of our church life should keep us praying. On our day away in March in a time of listening to God the PCC discerned a couple of things about our prayer.

One that we should be more intentional about our praying together. So that we can join in seeking God over the things of the life of the church. Anita produces a daily prayers through the week on the notice sheet and I produce a monthly diary with some written prayers and other topics of concern and need. But to bring a sense of journeying together in prayer we have decided to have a monthly prayer meeting – And I have decided it will be on the fourth Thursday of the month at 8pm for an hour beginning on the 26th May. Now I know, Thursday evening is a ridiculous day to have a prayer meeting for someone – I know – but it is the only time we have. So I would ask especially the PCC members but also all of us if we wouldn't prioritise that monthly hour to pray together. What it will be like I don't know yet. But that is the time.

The other thing about prayer is that we need men to be available to pray at the morning services, And we are disabled at this time by not having men here to do so. St. Paul writes 'I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands'.... Sue Marriott has stepped down from leading the prayer team and we are thinking about how we can re work the prayer co ordination. But if God's people don't pray then surely we don't know God.

One other thing that the PCC discerned on our day away was the feeling that the Parade should take on a greater purpose. What that will be exactly we don't really know. There are issues to do with securing the orchards to lease or to buy perhaps if it were to happen, and there is the need for a clarity of vision. But I want you to know it is not forgotten, nor is the parade a thing of the past. It is a place of blessing now and we sense of greater blessing in the future. The practice or prayer and prayer together will help us discern together what the future will bring there.

Give thanks in all circumstances.

So thirdly Paul talks of Giving thanks in all circumstances. The ‘all circumstances ‘ are important because there is a cost to it. This last year Two Ordinands have begun training – Andy gone away to Bristol and Simon on the St. Mellitus course. He is still with us but the focus of his attention is rightly on his studies and not on Meadgate Church. Now two more of our best people have been recommended for training and will be leaving us in September. Tom Warmington to Cambridge and Chris Smith possibly to Bristol. And what is worse they will be taking their wives and children with them. Just what is God doing? How will Meadgate Church Continue? Well what we will continue doing is giving thanks that his hand is upon the church continuing to raise up people to serve him.

We ought to give thanks also for the challenge of our finances which is bearing fruit among us. Our improved financial position comes from the coffee and soft play, from contributions for using the rooms from outside organisations but not least from increased giving from a good number of people. Allowing the generosity of God to flow through us. God’s people giving to the vision he has given them.

But I and we also ought to be giving thanks particularly to several individuals in our church. To Chris Smith, and Ros Coleridge for being church wardens and turning up in so many different places to do things, fix things, organise things and make them happen.

I would like to thank the members of our staff team Danielle, Steph, Toni and Kirsty. Not least for putting up with my foibles, but also for getting on with the job day by day. I particularly want to thank Danielle for the extra hours she gave us to leave the office more than up to date, and to Steph for her unending efforts to connect with the young people. And Toni and Kirsty for making me laugh - and for fulfilling the role of being ‘The kitchenettes’, getting the kitchen at the parade in a five star condition and keeping it there, despite neither of them admitting to being any good in a kitchen.

Then there is David Belbin who counts our beans, Tom Warmington who has got us working on making the Orchards a nice place to be in, Angela and Godfrey for keeping watch over the housegroups, Emma Smith who makes sure that musicians are available and know what’s what; Anita, Nadia and Gail Brown who have done amazing work on organising the cafés each with their own skill and style and Gail again who also clerks our safeguarding process, finally to Jill Smith Hughes who comes to the meetings prepared to take the notes and write them up and get them sent out. And the mystery man who cleans the toilets in the Parade. I know I have forgotten to thank someone. If it is you - Forgive me!

The thing is we give thanks in all circumstances. For all of you and our life together. Thanksgiving is what faithful people do. And we have much to give thanks for in this place. Because the life of God is here. We have learned something of his ways and we know him.

Be joyful always, Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances.

Rev Tim Ball

Vicar

Meadgate Church