



*"Our desire is to be a community **TRANSFORMED** by Jesus' love, fully devoted to **LOVING** one another and radically committed to **IMPACTING** the world with Christ's love."*



A series of bible studies which outline four commitments or expectations of St Faith's members that provide particular and practical ways to participate in our wider church vision.

Introduction

Helen Keller once said that the greatest tragedy to befall a person is to have sight but not vision. Being physically blind herself she was eminently qualified to make such a statement. Her perception of her own potential motivated her to achieve what others thought would be impossible. Having a sense of purpose is about having a sense of vision. Proverbs 29:18 says “Where there is no vision, the people perish”, or as the N.I.V puts it “Where there is no revelation the people turn aside”. The implication is clear: where there is no awareness of the revealed purposes of God, we become preoccupied with the here and now. Churches without such a sense of vision tend to become absorbed in merely keeping the status quo.

*Our desire at St Faith's is to be a community **transformed** by Jesus love, fully devoted to **loving** one another and radically committed to **impacting** the world with Christ's love.*

This statement is seen in action in various ways and forms through different ministries, opportunities to serve, mid-week small groups, Sunday services and various other outreach ministries in our local community. This booklet provides you with some more reading material that intends to unpack that vision statement for you.

During the month of February, however, we will consider *four commitments* which help us to see our vision expressed practically. It is my hope and prayer that these studies will provide much fruitful discussion which will lead to a clear conviction of our direction as a church and will give us, as members of St Faith's, four practical ways to see our vision become a reality in the years ahead.

Ben Molyneux

An Explanation of Our Vision Statement

“Our desire is to be a community transformed by Jesus’ love . . .”

What does it mean for us at St Faith’s?

While God does not change, it is clear that He is in the business of changing lives. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we are told that God is at work within us. We 'are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory' or from one degree of being like him to another. Paul's testimony in Philippians 3:4-14 expresses his desire to keep on growing in his understanding and experience of God. Paul was aware that this was a process that requires a single-minded and wholehearted response to Christ (Col. 1:29 & Eph. 1:15-17). He always kept before him God's primary purpose, that he be like Jesus and so he declared 'I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me'.

It is our desire then, that we as a community at St Faith’s would be changed by Jesus' love. Regardless of our age, our stage of life or the time we’ve been a Christian, God does not want us to be static or stale but people who are growing and maturing in our relationship with him. God has given us his Word the Bible, the Holy Spirit and the gift of prayer. It is as we pray and seek to align our lives with God's Word, that the Spirit of God will bring real and lasting change in us.

The careful and faithful teaching of the Bible is foundational to all that we do at St Faith’s. During the course of a year we will cover a broad but balanced preaching program. The Sunday preaching will be closely linked with the material in small groups. The small groups are designed to be places of learning, interaction, encouragement and support, to enable people the best opportunity to grow in their walk with God.

“...fully devoted to loving one another...”

What does it mean for us at St Faith’s?

The New Testament has much to say about the kind of people we should be and how we should live in the world and function in the church. We are told that we should pursue godliness and integrity (1Tim. 6:11), that our 'christian walk' should be a whole-of-life experience (Rom. 12:12) and that in our relationship with others we should practice the 'one another principles' (Heb. 10:24-25), consistently demonstrating a thankful attitude (Col. 3:15-17). These instructions are to be embraced as part of the process that God uses in transforming us into the likeness of Christ.

The Scriptures repeatedly refer to the church as the family of God. God does not want his children growing up in isolation from each other, so he has created a spiritual family on earth for us. We are to be people who not only 'believe' but who 'belong'. We are to belong to the family of God.

At St Faith’s we have three separate locations (Narrabeen, Warriewood & Collaroy Plateau) with various service times. Each service has its own style and particular focus, yet the intention is not

for any service to become exclusively for one generation or group. God's desire is for each person to become not merely an attender but rather a member of his family. Church is not just attending a Sunday service but church is being part of God's community. Church is participating in and contributing to the life and health of God's people. As a community we want to demonstrate Christ's love in action as we love and care for one another. That is why, in addition to attending regularly each Sunday, we stress the importance of the mid-week small groups for it is often in this context that relationships of depth can be formed and developed.

“...radically committed to impacting the world with Christ’s love.”

What does it mean for us at St Faith’s?

Edification (teaching and building one another up to be more like Christ) and evangelism are like the left and right hand of the church. On the one hand we are to be the people of God devoted to loving one another & helping each other grow to spiritual maturity. On the other hand, we are to be a witness to the world of Christ's love. The two function best when they are seen working together in the life of God's people. Paul links them in Galatians 1:16 declaring that God has called him in order “to reveal his Son in me, so that I might preach him among the Gentiles”. In the Great Commission, Jesus links these two principles: bringing people to Christ and teaching them to be disciples of Christ.

At St Faith’s, we want to demonstrate and declare the wonder of the gospel to a lost world in a variety of ways. From our preaching, to special services and events, courses which explain the basics of the Christian faith are all being planned at regular times throughout the year. Our Gumnut Kindy, The Cottage Counselling Centre, Scripture in Schools (primary and secondary), children’s programs, youth ministry, quilting clubs and many more groups in the life of our church provide us with opportunities to connect with our local community. Our concern for the lost extends beyond our local area, so we have specific links with several overseas missionaries and share a strong partnership in the gospel with them. Our desire at St Faith’s is to see each member impacting his or her world with the love of Christ. There are those amongst us who have the specific gift of being an evangelist and we want to identify and encourage them to use this gift. All of us, however, are called through what we say and do to reflect the love of Christ to those around us.

Commitment Series – February 2012

The “Commitment Series” in February, therefore, will help us to see four ways (there are more than four, of course) in which our vision can be expressed practically. Under God, we hope that these four studies will lead to a clear conviction of our direction as a church and will give us, as members of St Faith’s, four practical ways to see our vision become a reality in the years ahead.

1

A Commitment to SERVE

Spend some time as a group reading through and discussing our vision statement as explained above. What do you think we do well, not so well, could improve on, need to keep doing??

Imagine you were on the board of a large company and you were required to pick a new CEO for your company. What characteristics would you look for in such a leader? Would “putting the needs of others” come into the equation?

Read John 13:1-17

1. What does the act of washing the disciples feet symbolise about Jesus’ own ministry?
2. How do Jesus’ actions and words in this passage demonstrate his purpose as the Messiah? How do they compare with the popular view of what the Messiah would be like?
3. What was the essence of the charge he gave to his disciples in verses 12-17?
4. Read verse 15 again.

Following the example of Jesus in humble service (ie. washing each others feet!) is a difficult task – discuss some of the reasons why humble service of others can be so difficult for us.

Read Philippians 2:1-11

The Apostle Paul mentions a number of key things in this passage which relate directly to our study of being people who are committed to serve.....

5. Verse 3. Paul’s encouragement is to do nothing out of “selfish ambition or vain conceit” but rather, consider others better than ourselves. What does that look like in our world today? Can you give any examples of public people who might do this?

6. Verse 5. Our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus – in the verses which follow on from verse 5, how has Jesus demonstrated his attitude of service? Together, identify and discuss four things.

Reflection

Consider for a moment your own life – your family, your work, your involvement in serving the people of St Faith's.

7. How are you going at considering others better than yourself? Are you setting an example for others in putting their needs before your own?
8. Discuss together - how would your life be different if you *consistently* lived by verses 5-11, following the example of the Lord Jesus? How would your relationships change? How would your commitments change?
9. *Our desire at St Faith's is to be a community who are transformed by Jesus' love, fully devoted to loving one another and radically committed to impacting the world with Christ's love.*

If we at St Faith's are "fully devoted to loving one another" it will be noticed by others (John 13:35). What are some practical ways which you could apply these verses in your life and therefore contribute to seeing our church vision become a reality in 2012?

What are some ways that you could humbly 'wash the feet' of others this year? They may be individual things, or they may be things your small group can implement together in the year ahead. Discuss together and work out how to implement them in your life.

(PS. If you need a list of way you can serve at church, please speak to one of our staff – we've got lots of way you can humbly serve!).

Prayer Ideas

- Give thanks for Jesus, the Servant King, who came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).
- Give thanks for the example in humility the Lord Jesus gave us – ask God to help you to follow his example.
- Pray that we, as members of St Faith's, might be fully devoted to loving one another.
- Pray that as we devote ourselves to loving one another, others will see this love and recognise our love is from God, turn to him and be saved.

2

A Commitment to GIVE

In our world today there seems to be so much encouragement for people to grow their own personal wealth in such a way that they might enjoy a comfortable retirement and yet so little encouragement in generosity.

It has been said that “generosity is not generosity until it hurts. When it comes to giving until it hurts, most people have a very low threshold of pain.” – Unknown

Discuss this statement.

In this study we’ll consider Paul’s teaching to the Christians in Corinth. God had enriched the Corinthians in wonderful ways, and yet they were still hesitant to share what they had with others. So Paul encouraged them in their commitment to GIVE!

Read 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

1. In verses 1-5, Paul commends the Corinthians for their past eagerness to give to the poor. What affect did this have on others around them?

2. It seems that their initial enthusiasm to give may have slowed somewhat (see v5). With what attitude does Paul encourage the Corinthians to give? (see also v7, 8).

3. In what ways is *generous giving* like sowing and reaping (v6)? Do you think Paul is suggesting that a dollar given will return one hundred? Why or why not?

4. There is a beautiful path of blessing that flows from *generous giving* in this passage – see if you can follow along.....read the statement, read the verses and discuss (either in sharing your own experience or stories of others).....
 - a. Your giving will be a blessing to you (v10-11);

 - b. Your giving will be a blessing to others (v12)

 - c. Your giving will glorify God (v13)

d. Your giving will unite God's people (v14).

5. Paul finishes this passage with thanksgiving to God's "indefinable gift". What is Paul referring to and how might that motivate our commitment to give?

Reflection

6. What makes it difficult to give to others, particularly our money? What are some thoughts and ideas to remind us of the joy of giving?

7. Some people, it seems, are eager to be generous and others are hesitant in generosity. Are you a generous sower or a sparing sower? How might we learn to give cheerfully? Come up with some practical ideas to help you to be generous in your giving in 2012?

8. *Personal Reflection:* consider the use of your finances as they are today. How are you using them? How are you showing generosity with them? Are they being used solely for your own pleasure or are you generously giving it away? Does it hurt (see opening quote)? Are you, as a member of St Faith's, partnering financially with your church and other Christian organisations to see the work of the gospel continue and grow?

If appropriate, share some of your convictions, some of the things that need to change, and some goals for 2012 with your giving.

NB: at the back of this booklet there is an EFTPOS form which can be used to give electronically at St Faith's. This means that you're consistent in your giving and generosity (and won't be missed if you miss church for a week ☺). You can place this completed form in the church collection bags on Sunday.

Prayer Ideas

- Give thanks for our God, who is a God who "supplies seed to the sower and bread for food and will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness" (v10).
- Pray that, as members of St Faith's, we would be examples of people who are cheerful givers and who have a "high threshold of pain" when it comes to giving!
- Pray for our own church budget – pray that God would continue to provide and increase to enable more ministry and outreach to occur in our church and local community.
- Praise God for the generosity he has shown to us in the Lord Jesus.

3

A Commitment to MEET

Every day life is a series of value judgments in which, when all the factors are weighed, the people-oriented factors should take priority. All our fondest projects, the unfinished do-lists, all the paraphernalia of modern life we will leave behind in death. People are the stuff of eternity! A deep realization of this fact can't help but affect how we spend our lives - today and forever.

What are some of the things in life which stop us from meeting together as God's people?

Read Hebrews 10:19-25

1. Dig out the 5 'lettuces'.
 - v22 Let us ...
 - v23 Let us ...
 - v24 Let us ...
 - v25 Let us ...
 - v25 Let us ...
2. How are these five things to shape what we do as a community of believers at St Faith's?
3. Which of the five is the biggest challenge to you today? Why?
4. The writer of the Hebrews encourages the Christians to not give up meeting together. Why so and why is meeting together so important?

Reflection - read the illustration/story below out loud together.

THE SILENT SERMON

A member of a certain church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the preacher decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his preacher's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace...and waited. The preacher made himself at home but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the dance of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the preacher took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all

alone, then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet contemplation. As the one lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and dead. Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The preacher glanced at his watch and realized it was time to leave. He slowly stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow, once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the preacher reached the door to leave, his host said with a tear running down his cheek, 'Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I will be back in church next Sunday.'

5. In what ways might we “lose our glow” if we’re not meeting together with other Christians? In what ways do we “glow again” when we’re meeting together?

6. Consider together some ways that you might be able to “spur one another on” in the year ahead in your small groups and church. How can you encourage each other to be regular in your small group and to church? Jot down and commit to some ideas together for 2012.

7. *Personal Reflection* – what are some things in your life which might take you away from regular fellowship in your small group or church? Can you make changes to your life to enable you to commit regularly to meeting together with other Christians? Share with the group if appropriate.

Prayer Ideas

- Give thanks for the fellowship with other Christians that you currently enjoy.
- Give thanks for the Lord Jesus, in who’s name we meet for fellowship.
- Prayer for the year ahead, that you may commit to being regular in your small group and at church, to enable you to spur others on in their faith, and be spurred on yourself!

4

A Commitment to GROW

While God does not change, it is clear that he is in the business of changing lives. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we are told that God is at work within us we 'are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory' or from one degree of being like him to another. Paul's testimony in Philippians 3:4-14 expresses his desire to keep on growing in his understanding and experience of God. Paul was aware that this was a process that requires a single-minded and wholehearted response to Christ (Col. 1:29 & Eph. 1:15-17). He always kept before him God's primary purpose, that he be like Jesus and so he declared 'I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me'.

Jesus said "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt 6.21). We are invariably transformed into the likeness of whatever we worship - either the living God or some cheap substitute. What "cheap substitutes" might you be in danger of becoming like in your life?

1. As Christians how are we to be transformed? What are we being transformed into? (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:18 & Ephesians 4:17-25).
2. Read John 11:32-33, John 12:1-3 & Luke 10:38-42. Where do you find Mary in these passages? Why did Jesus say Mary had chosen what was better? What implications does this passage have for you?
3. Read Revelation 2:1-7. Which aspects of this church's life does Jesus find delightful? Which aspects does he find distasteful?

Reflection

4. Martin Luther said that on his calendar there were only two days, "today and that Day." He recognised that all the days of his earthly existence were preparation for that momentous day when he would stand before God in eternity and give account for his life. An eternal perspective will affect our values, priorities & outlook on life as we make decisions about the immediate in light of the ultimate.

What is one area of your life that you think God wants to transform and change at the moment? If you're brave, share this with the group and ask them to help you with it!

5. What will be important at St Faith's if we are to be a community of people who are being transformed by Jesus?

6. *Personal Reflection* – how will you commit to growing as a Christian this year? Maybe you need to be more regular in your reading of the Word, prayer, attendance at church, reflection of God's goodness to you? Consider a couple of key things which God might change in you in the year ahead and begin working towards seeing God grow you in this area.

Prayer Ideas

- Give thanks that God is a God who changes people by His Holy Spirit. Pray that we, as members of St Faith's, might be transformed into His likeness as we continue to meet together.
- Pray that you would be disciplined in the areas which require growth. Pray that God's Spirit would help you in those areas.
- Give thanks for the Lord Jesus, that he gave his life for each of us, already knowing our sin and imperfection!