

Vision and commitment in short September 2022

Posturing our hearts in surrender before Jesus

Mark 8:34-38

Here we see Jesus ready to surrender his own life so that you, and I, and all who call on him as saviour and Lord, will be saved for eternity.

It's a hard message. The way of Jesus is the way of the cross.

To deny ourselves to lift up God in our lives.

To deny ourselves our human desires of this life because God knows and wants our best. And our desires will never satisfy us when they are not his desires for us.

The image of the cross displays from the disciple, the total allegiance to Jesus and the abandonment of our claims to material, emotional, intellectual and all human assets.

When we take up our cross, when we posture our hearts in submission to Him, we are saying "Jesus, we are all in, and we want what you want not what we want."

When we seek to save our lives we will lose them. Because there is only one who can save. His name is Jesus.

And he is calling us to a deeper relationship with Him.

He is calling us to re-posture our hearts again today.

Remember when you first gave your life to Jesus. When you first said "yes" to Jesus.

The day you received His Holy Spirit and eternal life which comes only through Him.

Jesus is calling you back to your first love. To the way you were when you first knew Him. With that passion, with that excitement to see Him work in your life.

I believe this moment in our history as a church, is a moment of surrender. A moment to re-posture our hearts toward Jesus.

Who we are

St Mark's Church Mission statement. We seek to be:

Knowing Jesus – Loving Each Other – Caring for our Community

Our Values as a church. That we are:

All involved

Becoming Disciples

Creating Community

Doing Evangelism

Encountering God

Rule of life

Called to: Pray, Read & Learn

Sent to: Serve, Tell & Give

Vision of the wave

We are living under the vision of the wave received by Dan and the staff team at the New Wine Leadership conference in March 2019 and confirmed many times since

In a time of silence, I heard God whisper 'are you ready?'

And I said, "ready for what Lord?"

I felt him say "for a new wave of my spirit bringing new believers. People who need much love, people who need me in their lives. People who are hurting, who are lost, who need much love and much grace"

I felt him saying that he would restore the years lost by the church, but that he had no place for pride, the pride of an organisation. That we are called to be his children, and follow where he was leading.

That night, I shared what I felt I'd heard from God with the team, and said that with anything this big, we needed to test it, to pray into it, and if it was from God it would grow in us, and if it wasn't, it would fall away.

Well on the final morning, New Wine ditched their programme and instead opened the whole morning up to God to speak. (This hasn't happened at any of the previous conferences I've attended)

And the speaker, a guy called Steve Uppal, confirmed my picture of the new wave of people coming and asked the question were we ready? Now he was speaking to all the gathered church leaders, he had no idea he'd directly confirmed this word from God to us.

The wave today

I believe that wave started breaking over us in January of this year.

We had started to prepare for this wave, which stood us in better stead than we would have been when the pandemic hit. But that wasn't the wave. We didn't just prepare to rebuild our ministries after the pandemic, we discerned from the Lord His call to reach the young people of Haydock in a New way through employing a Pioneer Youth worker and we discerned the need to offer food provision, alongside improving our services offered through T.A.N.G.O

Since January of this year, we have seen 60-70 people accessing the services of our Food pantry,

and over 40 young people engaging regularly with our Wednesday Youth programme.

We've launched a new congregation specifically catered to the needs of those who want a less formal style of the church gathering in the form of the voyager congregation

We're also now seeing the alpha course run in Outwood and even more engagement in the lives of both Legh Vale and Outwood Academy (Haydock High)

Not to mention, the new seeker support on Fridays, seeing many local refugees given space to enjoy fun together and to access some food and clothing provision.

And that's just the new stuff. We offer the community affordable furniture and clothing through our TANGO Warehouse and shop, a mid-week cafe which is just booming. A new chef, a new kitchen assistant and a real desire to connect with others from our community have seen the centre filled with tables and chairs after the community groups have finished, just to keep up with demand.

We have so many mid-week groups, our toddler group, after-school club, ladies' meeting, craft group, and community garden.

People are being supported, the hungry fed, those in need of clothing are being clothed, and those with little are being provided for. We're being even better stewards of our environment, we're saving over 45 tons of food, furniture and clothing from landfill, and we'll be celebrating our latest Silver ECO award in a couple of weeks when Ruth from Tear-fund leads us in our ECO Sunday.

That's much, but not all, of our regular outreach and community work.

God is at work! throughout the week here at St Mark's T.A.N.G.O

You can view a video of all the ad hoc missional events at <https://stmarkshaydock.org/new/> such as Christmas Wrapping, Easter Quest, Summer Party, Light night, pancake party, Carols café & Quiz etc.

St Mark's, I want you to leave today knowing that you belong to an active Church, providing for this community in ways I haven't seen in other churches I've been a part of.

God is doing something very special here, and he has entrusted us with this gift.

Last year, I encouraged you from Paul to fan into flame the gift which God has given you. In 2020, I asked you the question "what is in your hands", what has God blessed you with?

And in 2019 we explored Jesus saying, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also". Matthew 6:21

This year, I felt God clearly say he wants us to surrender our lives to Him. Surrender in every part.

The Vision in 2022

The vision this year, which I believe I've caught from God is of St Mark's as a beacon of love, joy and hope to this community. A Church full of people who are on fire for Jesus. A people who set aside differences, who allow Him to cast out all fear, and who commit themselves fully to the service of Jesus.

I believe the Lord told me last year that we were finishing the phase of preparation, and that we needed to invest in the growth which he will bring in three years' time. That was last summer. I believe these next two years need to be even more intentional. We need to invest in people in our local community, particularly where we're seeing God's hand on someone's life, stepping up our intentionality around why we do what we do, and asking big questions about fruitfulness. Because as we've seen, fruit grows where we're abiding in Christ. When we don't see fruit, we need to ask questions about pruning.

So our vision in short is riding the wave, picking up our surfboards, disciples of St Mark's stepping into our mission of Knowing Jesus, Loving each other and Caring for our community.



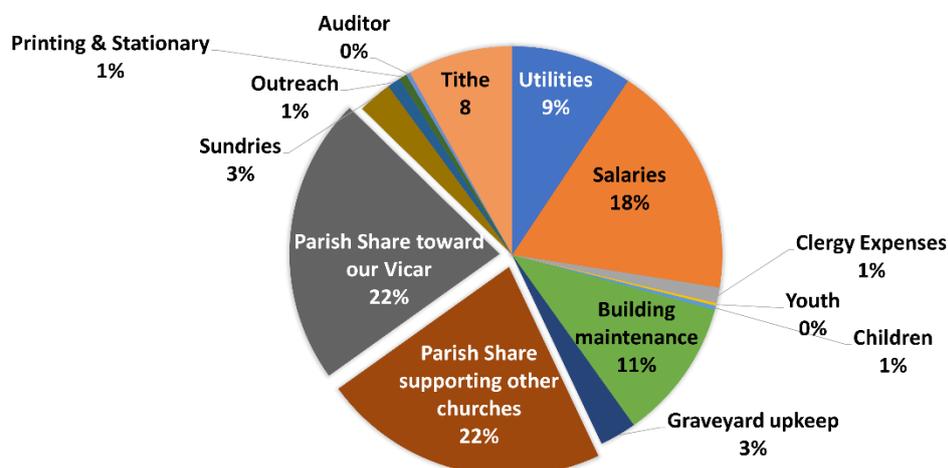
Commitment - financial

As we move to the third and shortest part of my talk this morning, we talk about our commitment to Jesus in light of the vision you've heard and His call to surrender.

I will talk first about commitment in financial giving, and secondly in service.

For a breakdown of our expenditure, you can watch the video online <https://stmarkshaydock.org/giving/> which explains it in better detail, but the basic pie chart is here

General Budget Expenditure 2022



But the headline takeaways are

- Your money is being stewarded well by the PCC, Standing Committee and Verna our treasurer and those who support her in that role.
- The cost of St Mark's last year divided by 200 regular worshippers (over a month) is £24 per adult per week
 - I share this figure every year because it helps you have an idea of what it would take to break even each year. I know not everyone can give this much, but also that others can give, and do give more
 - If 200 of us weekly gave £24 (around £100 a month) St Mark's would break even.
- The projected deficit for the church (which only considers planned income) is -£53,395 which includes our early estimates for the increase of the fuel bills here

Now I know that this time of giving is hard. This is our annual call to bring your financial commitment to God. This really is between you and God, but as your church family, we are asking you to help us plan our finances by letting us know confidentially. The only people who will see the completed forms are Verna and Carol Gedney who keep your information confidential.

Friends, we do this once a year, we ask you to consider giving a regular planned gift to the life of the Church. Planned gifts allow us to do more with the money you entrust to us. We are also asking you to ask the Lord if He is asking you to give a one off gift today.

A biblical model of giving is to give 10% of your income to God as an offering. It's not a command that you give 10%, but it is a biblical precedent. If you're not giving anything, I recommend you look at your monthly income and see what you can move to give 1-5%. If you give 5% why not offer God 6%?

The model we use personally as a family, is the one recommended by the Church of England. Giving 10% of our total income to the life of St Mark's first and foremost and then anything we can afford above that goes to other charities.

Don't forget, that 10% of your gift to St Mark's also supports national and international charities.

Now, your giving is between you and God. It is not for us to tell you what to give, this is between you and the Lord.

Commitment – serving (giving of time and energy)

The other part of our commitment and surrender to Christ in St Mark's, is in service.

Firstly, are you involved in the life of the Church?

I have to thank everyone who is at this moment. I am so blessed to be the Vicar of a Church where the culture is to serve. And I know many of you have served the Lord faithfully in this place, and in others, for many years.

The Lord isn't done with any of us yet, and we have serving roles which are less physically challenging than others, for those who feel less able than maybe they were.

We do have a lot of areas where we need more support.

I'm asking whether you feel God is calling you to any of these roles.

- The technical, but not tricky, roles of **sound and visuals** teams
- The opportunity to share your faith with our **children and youth**. As part of safer recruitment, we have a good process for exploring these roles.
- How about our **welcome and hospitality teams**, showing warmth and love by continuing to make every person welcome in this building.
- Our **sung worship team** is stretched and would love those of you who are musical or love to sing to explore joining their team. And if anyone is rhythmical and would like to explore playing the Cajon, the box drum, you'd be very welcome.
- **TANGO and Food pantry**, serving the local community's needs, creating connection points.
- And our warden's team, who oversee the background work of services, was already thin on the ground before the wonderful Sue suddenly went to glory.

As a member of St Mark's, as a church family member, I wonder where the Lord is calling you to serve and is he calling you to serve in a more intentional way?

Pledge forms

Included in this letter is a pledge form which you can also complete online, and I'd love you to pray about it over the next couple of weeks. Once you have checked your finances and you've heard from God, I'd like to ask you to return the completed form. I'd love every household in the Church to have completed this form to help us with our planning and as a sign of your commitment to Jesus. You can also complete the form online by heading to <https://stmarkshaydock.org/giving/>

Connect groups

The feedback I'm getting from members of the new Connect groups is that people are growing in their faith in new ways and feeling plugged in both to the Church family and particularly in their relationship with Jesus. For more information visit <https://stmarkshaydock.org/church-members/> or ask the office or a member of clergy, and we'd love to connect you in.