



St John's Church  
hensingham

# Passionate Disciples

A vision document for St John's Hensingham

March 2025. Version 4





# From the Vicar

What the church desperately needs today is revival. We still believe that Jesus is the only answer to the problems of our nation and church; as well as our own hearts.

It was by a fresh encounter with Jesus Christ that every missionary movement was born. Not by new techniques or clever strategies, but by the rediscovery in the church that Jesus is more beautiful and captivating than we could have imagined.

The thinking in this document builds on the significant work we did in 2019 for our church vision: 'Our Gospel DNA.' While some themes have been built on, our new vision identifies exciting opportunities and responds to fresh challenges highlighted by a survey of the whole church and a PCC Away Day in November 2024.

When the Church Council reflected on the past 5 years at our PCC Away Day, we felt grateful to God and also renewed our commitment to remain faithful to God in the vision going forward.

The result of our prayerful deliberations is a new commitment to be 'passionate disciples.' God's primary concern is that we love him with all our heart and love our neighbour (Luke 10:27). Indeed, 'we love because he first loved us' (1 John 4:19). It is so easy to be busy doing, when there is so much need around us- but we don't simply want to be busy! Because of this, we are prioritising discipleship that inspires us to know God from His Word.

And so, in fresh obedience to Jesus, we commit ourselves to ways of life together that sustain our walk with Him.


Our three aims are:

1. Enjoying God from His Word
2. Loving One Another
3. Sharing His Word that others might enjoy Him too.

I therefore warmly invite you to join us on this journey as we seek to live as passionate disciples.

*Si Walker*

Vicar



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# Our Values

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**W**e desire to work our values through all we do and believe passionately in the values that shape our church. We believe that God has used these things to revive his church in the past and that He can do so once again.



## Jesus Centred

We will proclaim Jesus as 'the way the truth and the life' (John 14:6), speaking always of Him.



## Bible Centred

We will search the Scriptures in our life together and take it as our supreme authority. Our beliefs can be found [here](#).



## Gospel Centred

We will preach the way of salvation and explain how the gospel shapes our lives. We will preach Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23).



## We seek to embody these values by being

### Faithful

Working in ways that honour Christ and His call to be faithful disciples, we will contend for the truth (Jude 3).

### Prayerful

Our weekly prayer meetings are the engine room of our church. We will prioritise personal and corporate prayer, seeking God for all things (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

### Humble

Wanting to be confident in Christ's call should not be confused with arrogance. Therefore we will listen well to others (Ephesians 4:2).



**Love the Lord your God with all  
your heart and with all your  
soul and with all your strength  
and with all your mind**

Luke 10:27

**Aim 1:  
Enjoying God  
from His Word**

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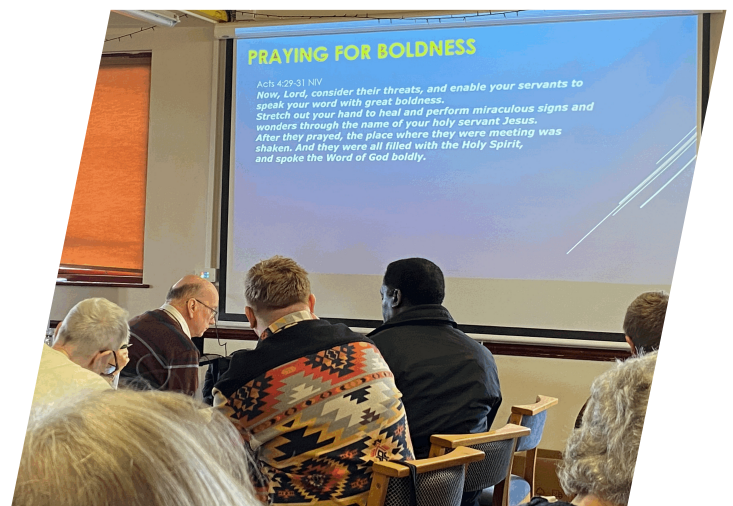
# "Love for God is the foundation of everything"

Notice the centrality of love for God in the Bible. In his discipleship training with an expert in the law, Jesus accepted the following as the means to eternal life.

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' (Luke 10:27.) But that wasn't the whole story: this love would flow out into loving your neighbour as yourself.

This is why we say that the love of God is the foundation of everything else. A changed heart leads to godly actions that honour God. It protects us from pharisaism and a focus on mere externals and wanting to look good. A person must be born again and changed by God's Spirit (John 3:6).

Of course, this new birth and loving God with all our heart necessitates knowing Him to be lovely! Because of this, we will seek to hear God's challenging Word which calls us to leave our sins and follow Jesus. We will cultivate a healthy spiritual life with God through prayer and ask of the Spirit to give us hearts that love God. And we will lift up Jesus- the pearl of great price - knowing that, as we behold his glory, we are transformed into his image (2 Corinthians 3:18).



# "Divine love flows from the relationships in the Godhead"

So why is the gospel so incredibly heart-warming?

Its because the gospel is not intellectualism ('know the right thing'), nor is it activism ('do the right thing') or moralism ('behave the right way'). The gospel is that all who trust in Christ for salvation are made new creations. They are no longer captive to sin and defined by their old nature.

Those who cannot save themselves find that this Christ dies for sinners, to put them right with God, so that they are acceptable in His sight.

But... and here is the amazing news: God does not just give us something called grace (a kind of legal transaction.) Far more wonderfully, God gives us himself. God is the gospel because divine love flows from the relationships within the Godhead. Let's consider

this further.

The members of the Trinity have always loved one another perfectly.

At his baptism, heaven opens and the Spirit descends on Jesus as a dove. The Father speaks and says: 'You are my Son who I love..' (Luke 3:22). The Father has always delighted in His Son and has extended that same love to humanity by making believers his sons.

It is why J.I. Packer said that adoption was the greatest doctrine a Christian could come to understand. Because when we are in Christ, God the Father is also equally pleased with us and God's Spirit fills us.

# How will we encourage enjoyment of God?

## Priorities

1. Preach the gospel of Jesus to each other.
2. Promote daily Bible reading and prayer, widen public reading of Scripture and make ourselves more conversant with the rhythms and wisdom in our Anglican heritage.
3. Appoint an Associate Vicar who will oversee discipleship and pastor our volunteers.
4. Promote positive complementarianism and training opportunities for women and men to explain the Scriptures.
5. Grow the staff team to equip others.
6. Seek and encourage the development of the ministries of church members for daily living on their front line.





"For a single person,  
St John's provides  
family life, friends  
and fellowship"

Survey respondent

# **Aim 2:**

# **Loving one**

# **another**

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should achieve?

The Apostle Peter writes: 'Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.' What cause does Peter identify? He goes on to say: 'For you have been born again...' (1 Peter 1:22-23).

The result of knowing and enjoying God - if authentic in nature - will cause us to love our brothers and sisters deeply. In the recent church survey, many people commented upon the sense of family they feel at St John's and our immense unity across different backgrounds and cultures. This is a work of God for which we pause, acknowledge and give thanks.

But isn't this what the gospel

During times of turmoil in the Church of England, we have had to decide to walk in the truth of God's Word. Sometimes critics can say that holding to ancient truths is not loving, but that is untrue. We cannot be more loving than Jesus and his teaching! His call to extravagant welcome and radical holiness are so important.

Of course, in a larger church, it can be hard to get to know one another well and so we encourage all to join Bible Study Groups, in which we can care for one another and be known.

**'...love your neighbour  
as yourself'  
Luke 11:27**



# How will we love one another better?

## Priorities

1. Prayerfully work to multiply Bible Study groups and to encourage everyone to join one as a means to caring well for one another.
2. Make the most of our welcome team and visiting team, welcoming people when they come to services and visiting them in their homes when they cannot attend.
3. Represent our culturally diverse church family in every area of church life.
4. Raise awareness of how to get involved by publishing opportunities to serve or join things more clearly.
5. Encourage humility because we know that we are sinners saved by God's grace.



**Aim 3:  
Sharing God's  
Word so that  
others enjoy Him**

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# 'We will naturally want to share it'

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Our goal is to see others drawn into the relationship of love that we have encountered with Jesus and which flows from God to us.

It is in God's Word that we meet Him. As our hearts are warmed by hearing and living out the gospel, we will naturally want to speak about it and witness through our lives. We won't be able to restrain ourselves!

Our friends and neighbours need to hear and particularly we have a heart for Hensingham. 89% of our church respondents said they felt confident to explain to someone how to become a Christian. That's a great army of word sharers that we as a Church Council long to mobilise. They're already shining the light of Christ in families, workplaces, schools and other networks around Whitehaven.

We also believe in church planting as a means to growth. If we start a new Anglican church to reach more people, 22% of people said they would consider attending and serving there. Imagine how God might use the desire of our hearts for His glory and other's joy.

# How will we share God's Word?

## Overview

Evangelism is a scary word for many. But it doesn't have to be. As passionate disciples we just live what we know and we speak about who we serve in the places we go. We recognise our weakness has been in reaching the community with the gospel. For a large church, few people come from our estate, but we are endeavouring to change this and making it the subject of prayer.

Many people saw our strengths as the welcome and diversity in the church family. Over the past few years we have seen a greater diversity of people from around the world join our church family. People were also positive about the new work in the parish delivering Christian Newspapers and opening doors for discussions.

## Priorities

1. To do a few onsite events excellently at St John's but not to concentrate on saying 'come to us' and lots of events.
2. To prioritise door to door work and expand the distribution of Good News Newspapers into new zones of the parish. We will look at individuals taking ownership of zones.
3. To explore beginning new Bible Studies or congregations in zones of the parish.
4. To ask God to raise up church planters and to give Interns the opportunity to explore full time paid ministry in West Cumbria.
5. To equip members to be word sharers.
6. A social media strategy led by our Church Coordinator using platforms that connect with younger people.

# Our Mission Community

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We have worked with St Andrew's and St Bridget's for many years and enjoy the fact they are also evangelical churches. We see Mission Community as like-minded churches partnering for mission by sharing people, pounds, prayer and encouragement. Where it strengthens mission, we will join forces.

For example, we may share midweek children's groups, training events or an outreach to an area.

In 2022 we planted Church on the Moor which is a member of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC). Our goal in planting an independent church was to work with the theology of the person we felt God was calling to lead that church. The reason we believe God laid Cleator Moor on our hearts was the huge need for a gospel church in that town. We asked ourselves, 'why should they not hear of Jesus?'

In the future we would like to develop more congregations of gospel hearted small churches who can impact different parts of Whitehaven. Initially we would like to explore developing more congregations in our own parish, but as opportunity arises we may look further afield. We will develop Anglican congregations.

Rather than growing St John's to be a church that is increasingly larger in number, we aim to sustain a healthy congregation at St John's, while spreading gospel influence to needy areas. Instead of an ocean liner, we will strive to produce a flotilla of rescue boats in West Cumbria.

## ST ANDREW'S MIREHOUSE



## St John's Church hensingham



**'we will strive to produce a flotilla of rescue boats'**



To see our Mission Community events, [click here](#)

# How can I join the vision?

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Here are some ways to respond that we think mark a passionate disciple.

**Passionate disciples enjoy God from His Word.** Commit to reading the Word daily. You could join us in reading Daily Psalms or cultivate other habits such as joining one of our Bible Study groups.

To view the Daily Psalms plan click [here](#).

Our Bible Study Coordinator will help find an appropriate group for you.



**Passionate disciples share the Word.** Commit to witnessing in your daily life. You may like to join us for Casting Your Nets training, join in with our door to door work or simply be a word sharer where God places you!

**Passionate disciples give of their resources and of themselves.** We encourage everyone to give sacrificially to God's work from their finances and by serving the church family with their time and talents.

[Give to the gospel work of St John's.](#)

**Passionate disciples pray.** Please join by praying personally and at our Sunday Services and Prayer meeting. Together we seek God for the goals in this vision and ask God to enlarge our hearts and grow his work in Whitehaven and the world.