**Vision evening 2018.**

The Big picture. ‘There is a Redeemer’. In our fragile world there is hope! There is a saviour!

**Outward.**

Acts 26:16-17 describes Paul’s commission by the risen Jesus to go to the gentiles and ‘open their eyes**, bring them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, for the forgiveness of sins ands a place amongst those sanctified’**

When I read these verses this summer I was convicted and convinced that this worldview, this Jesus world view is reality and the commission Paul had, is our commission too. It’s the ongoing commission of the Church. Yet it’s easy to treat Christianity as just another self-improvement scheme offered by a benevolent God, rather than a divine rescue plan for people in enemy occupied territory. I think we are called to be pro active about this message, and not just rest on our laurels as a ‘successful’ church that people will want to come and find.

So what do we believe about those spiritual powers that hold people back and ultimately de-humanise them? How do we reach our City and wider world? Do we see as Jesus sees, a ‘harvest field’ in our City amongst people who are ‘like Sheep without a shepherd’? If we do we are likely to respond to a call to be ourselves labourers in that harvest.

Church planting is the best strategy for changing a nation. We are a church planting Church. Metro is an expression of the Woodlands Church. It is a ‘lab’ in a way, an experiment which Philip and Kate are running, to find the very best way of reaching a missing generation of students and younger adults with the good news of Jesus. Similarly ‘All Saints’ Church is an expression of Woodlands, (wanting every community in our city to have the opportunity to hear the message and belong to Gods people), locating in a needy and unchurched community in Hartcliffe. We want to see Church planting continue regularly in coming years, with South and East Bristol being served in this way.

We do want to proactively encourage everyone in our Church, wherever they worship to think about ‘Go and tell’ and ‘Come and see’. Alpha is a key plank in this strategy of course. As we give out Woodies ‘business cards’ tonight, how can we maximise opportunities to invite our contacts to come along to Alpha, Sunday or a Woodies event? We want to re-visit some of the ‘going out’ as teams from woodlands to explore faith sharing ways not just with our friends but in cold contact situations. Feelgood Café is another opportunity for outreach. More of this will be explored in our breakout time.

**Inward.**

John Wimber used to say ‘It is one thing to catch the fish, it’s another to clean them’. If people are drawn to our Church how do we pastor and disciple? How do we deal with the baggage that people bring from our messy world? Sometimes an outward facing Church is not great at Pastoral Care. In ‘Find Love Follow Serve’ thinking what happens when you have ‘found’? How do people thrive at Woodlands?

I think there are four key ingredients people need.

1. ‘I’m in a community’
2. ‘I have a relationship with a significant leader’
3. ‘I know where I’m serving’
4. ‘I have the help and presence of the Holy Spirit’

What I’m looking for this year is

1. **The multiplication of healthy and well-resourced groups and pastorates**. Tim Dobson has as a key element in his job description supporting mid-week Church. We are also developing Congregational leadership teams in each of our four Sunday services at Woodlands Central to strengthen the sense of community around where people worship
2. **The expansion of our Core leadership team** (we welcome Hazel & Brad Askew as well as Tim Dobson & Julia Shrimpton on to Core to provide leadership for Central congregation, as Philp & Kate with Sam Cook do at Metro and Zoe Probert and am Higgins do at All Saints). We also value our leaders of ministries and look to have leaders around demographics (we welcome Steve Ballard as newly appointed young adults pastor) and geographical areas.
3. **Clearer Serving pathways.** Service is both ‘in the Church’ and ‘in the World’. In the Church we are grateful for people who have made their professional skills available to help us, particularly Louise Hughes and Brad Askew our trustees, and Nigel Fish around Fire Safety, and Dave Major in offering advice on employment set up. We are currently looking for people in Congregation who may help us as we seek to offer mandatory training to our new ‘employed’ team in areas of ‘manual handling and lifting’ COSHH, safe use of digital ‘screens’ etc and in particular safeguarding as we seek to recruit a safeguarding lead for the group of Churches. We are also aware of the big hole left by Ludo in making Sunday happen and need to recruit for our hospitality, welcome, tech, and children and youth teams. If you have a general interest in or enquiry about volunteering contact[tim.dobson@woodlandschurch.net](mailto:tim.dobson@woodlandschurch.net). In the wider market place service we partner with many agencies in the City in our rile as a gathered rather than a ‘parish’ Church. Though this has been deliberate we want to strengthen our pathways in volunteering with agencies like Food Bank, Crisis Centre Ministries or Beloved or the opportunities provided by Love Bristol’s ministries. We do want to see local congregational service growing too around the areas of the City where we have strength in depth.
4. **The Spirit.** ‘Unless the Lord builds the house the builder labours in vain’. The life of the Spirit is fed by our worship together and a welcome to His Ministry. As we pursue Wholeness and healing and are a ‘Wholeness Centre’ our training in Prayer ministry, the Prophetic (including ‘Love has a voice training with Liz Evans) our Wholeness Courses, and advanced training are all significant expressions of this priority. Really that ongoing, relentless desire to be filled with and walk in the Spirit has to come from the heart, from my heart but from all of us who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and be expressed in that daily prayer ‘Fill me again’.