

# A Renewed Vision for St John the Baptist, Barlaston



2022-2024

## **Introduction**

When Stewart first arrived as our Vicar, he encouraged us to develop a vision document to help us identify the way we believed God was calling us to travel. That document was launched in 2018 and came to an end in 2021. A full review of what we said we would do took place, but this was of course at a time of lockdown due to Covid. Nevertheless, much was achieved in those three years and the experience of having a direction of travel showed us all how helpful such a vision document is to the whole of the church family.

This new document is the next stage of our journey, and we hope our learning experience from the past will help us as we move forward into the coming years. This document has been prepared following a PCC meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and is the distillation of much prayer, discussion, reflection, and planning.

Like all these documents, it only works if we all get involved. Please read through what has been said and what is planned and where you can help, please do offer your gifts and skills.

## **Foundations**

### **Community**

It was strange and difficult when we were unable to meet for worship in our building during the covid 19 lockdowns. We missed singing together, praying together, receiving word and sacrament together, sharing news and information together, having a cup of coffee or tea together. All these activities were missed but mostly because we were unable to be an active community. What mattered was being the family of the church. Isolation is not healthy. We have begun to re-establish that community but we need to go further and deeper, encouraging those who have drifted away to return and to draw new people to be part of our family.

**To rebuild the church community and to extend it to more and more of Barlaston must be a priority for the coming years.**

### **Discipleship**

We are living through a time which for many people is when faith is being challenged: Covid 19; war in Ukraine and other places, the cost-of-living crisis, hunger and increasing poverty, and political instability. Where is God in all of this? How can my being a follower of Jesus Christ make any difference? Does he hear my prayers and if he does what answers am I getting? Life has continued without going to church. Why do I need to go? The list of questions

is a very long one. It would be very easy to simply give up because it feels too hard to do anything else. But that isn't going to help. It will simply make us deeply disillusioned and possibly desperately cynical.

Increasingly, in our country and community a distinctive Christian set of values and lifestyle is ignored, undermined, or forgotten. We need to go deeper into the resources God has given us: prayer, worship, and the Bible if we are to create strong, effective disciples of Jesus Christ. Once a week fill up spirituality will not be enough to cope with the challenges that lie ahead.

**There needs to be a greater emphasis on prayer, expectant worship, and a growing understanding of what the scriptures have to say to us today.**

### **Christ**

The history of the Christian faith in this country and throughout the world is a mixture of good times and challenges. There have been years of growth and years of decline. What is remarkable is that the Christian faith adapts to the new environment and finds ways to continue to grow and mature. It is one of the remarkable features of Christianity. Such changes are reflected in our own experience here in Barlaston. What remains constant though is the person of Christ, his call on our lives and our desire to worship and serve Him.

**The person of Jesus Christ, him crucified and risen, is what matters most of all and we are called to proclaim His name and live for him in 21<sup>st</sup> century Barlaston.**

### **What will we do?**

On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2024 it will be 40 years since the current church building was consecrated. This is a date for us to work towards as a useful focal point for celebration and thanksgiving. It also happens to be a Sunday.

The idea is to see all that we are doing between now and November 2024 as a road map. The end point of this part of the journey is 17<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024. After that we reflect on what has happened, what has been achieved and plan for the next stage of life at St John's. This time frame is long enough to achieve a lot and short enough to help us focus on what we want to do.

## Community

### The building:

- Hospitality area: Chairs, tables, information. Continue to improve this.
- Work on our welcome including offering training to our welcomers.
- Increase the use of the building and hence being open more often.
- Consider organising an 'Open day' where people can visit, learn about baptism and weddings etc.
- Enhance a holy, prayerful worship area.
- Continue to ensure the building is well maintained.

### Services

Sundays	8.30am	Holy Communion (1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of month)
	10.30am	Holy Communion with MOSAIC children's group.
	4pm	Baptisms and special services.
Wednesdays	10.30am	Holy Communion

- We will explore an alternative to the Eucharist services on a day and at a time that will attract those on the fringe, new Christians and those who want something in addition to Holy Communion Services.
- We will establish at least three annual social events for the church family to enjoy.

### We will continue and develop:

- Our links with Barlaston First School & Nursery through assemblies and a possible after school club.
- OASIS – the weekly Thursday Coffee time.
- MOSAIC – children's Sunday group.
- Our weekly email and online presence.
- Family events including Good Friday and Advent workshops and Light Party.
- New groups for people to join.
- Taking Communion to those in Care Homes.

## **Discipleship**

- Reintroduce a specific time to gather for prayer.
- Offer a Christian Basics course for people who are not sure about the faith to come along and explore.
- Set up a discipleship course for those within the Church community to grow in their faith through learning from the Bible and applying it to our daily lives.
- Continue with relevant and appropriate sermon series at the 10.30am service.
- Develop our mission links: Kibera, Kenya. Christian Aid.
- In November 2024 create a Mission week of events leading up to a celebration on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> Nov of 40 years of God's faithfulness in our current building.

## **Christian**

In all that we do we will be unashamedly Christ centred. We are a Christian community, and He is who we proclaim and follow.

## **Conclusion**

The detail of what we hope to achieve in the coming years still needs to be worked out. The Ministry team, the PCC and the whole church family will be part of that working out. We will also need to ensure we have the resources (financial, skills, gifts, and time) to achieve what we believe God is calling us to do. Again, everyone needs to play a part in this.

We have much to give thanks for and there is much to be excited and challenged about in the coming years. With the help of each other, the power and presence of the risen King, Jesus Christ, those challenges can and will be met. The next stage of the journey is laid out before us. Let us pray with anticipation that he who is faithful will do it.

**The Parochial Church Council  
St John the Baptist  
Barlaston**

## **Spiritual Resources**

As we begin this latest part of our journey of faith we can draw upon the rich and deep resources of scripture, worship, and prayer. Below is a short reading and a prayer that we invite you to use in the coming days, weeks, and months.

### **A Bible Reading**

***'And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.'***

***(Hebrews 10v24-25)***



### **A Prayer**

Gracious God,  
our loving heavenly Father,  
We thank you for calling us to be a part  
of your faithful community here in Barlaston.  
Help us to work together to serve our community  
with energy, sacrifice and servant hearts.  
May you, by the power of your Holy Spirit,  
fulfil all that you have planned for us in the coming years  
and may we rejoice as we witness  
your vision for your church in this place come to pass.  
We pray these things in and through the name  
of the one who came reveal your love and grace,  
Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.  
Amen.





- Joining our Children's leaders' team
- Leading prayers in a service
- Reading the bible in a service
- Joining our welcomers team
- Helping with the computer for services
- Helping to count the collections
- Helping with the magazine
- Other (Please list here what else you can offer!)

Please complete your contact details and return you completed response page to the box provided in Church or contact Stewart Jones, the Vicar, on 01782 373126 or by email [canonstewart@icloud.com](mailto:canonstewart@icloud.com) Thank you.

NAME: \_

ADDRESS:

Email:

Telephone Number: