

St Mathew's Darley Abbey 200th Anniversary Year

Telling our story

Celebrating the faithfulness of God

Offering the Good News of Jesus Christ

Introduction

On Sunday the 2nd of December, the Diocesan Missioner Jason Kennedy came to help us think about our plans for the 200th anniversary of St Matthew's Church in Darley Abbey. In his sermon that morning, he reflected on the description of the early church in Acts 2.42-47 and encouraged us to think about what was at the heart of our celebrations, and what message we wanted to communicate to the wider community at this important milestone in our church's history.

Jason made the following points in his sermon:

- The church is not the centre of God's mission; rather, God's mission is focused upon the reconciliation of himself to the whole world (Col 1.20) and the offer of 'life in all its fullness' to all people everywhere (Jn 10.10).
- As the founder and cornerstone of our church (Eph 2.19-22), it is God in Jesus Christ who should decide our focus and calling.
- We are called to be in fellowship with one another, to grow together in discipleship and to build one another up (Eph 4.11-16), *so that* we can fulfil our true calling to worship God in Christ and engage in his mission in the world.
- Our whole-life worship of God in Christ is not just about our services. The centrality of Christ in our common life informs our attitudes and actions, and decides our priorities (Col 3.1-3).
- God's mission, our main task, is to be His ambassadors in the world, offering his message of reconciliation to the people and communities he calls us to love and serve (2 Cor 5.17-21).
- All this means that our celebration is not primarily a building, or the ones who have built it, but rather Jesus Christ, the one for whom it was built, and his message of love, hope, grace and reconciliation to the whole world.
- This 200th anniversary offers a unique opportunity for us to declare that love, hope, grace and reconciliation to the people of Darley Abbey and offer them an invitation to 'come and see' who Jesus is and what he offers.

Questions for Discussion

Part 1: Being the Church of Jesus Christ

1. How do you respond to the points Jason made in his sermon?

Part 2: Our purpose and message

2. What are we **celebrating** in this 200th anniversary year of St Matthew's?
3. What **stories** should we tell in the wider community through this 200th anniversary year of St Matthew's that would allow us to be ambassadors for God's message of love, hope, grace and reconciliation in that community?
4. What **messages** should we offer to the community as a church through this 200th anniversary year and beyond to help us carry out God's mission to his church?

Part 3: Our activities and events in St Matthew's 200th Anniversary Year

5. How would you describe the community of Darley Abbey as it is now and the changes it has undergone in the last 30 years?
6. What events and activities would allow us to celebrate all that we wish to celebrate and yet be attractive and welcoming to the current community of Darley Abbey?
7. What events and activities would tell the stories we would like to tell in the current community of Darley Abbey?
8. How can we convey the messages we want to convey to the current community of Darley Abbey, through the events and activities in which you will engage?