

Morning Services 2007

It will be necessary to start to run two morning services starting in late September. This may prove to be the most exciting thing we do as a church for the next several years. Let me explain:

Why do we need two services?

This move is *prompted by the redevelopment work* which will begin later this year. We have spent much time and made many contacts to acquire provision for our full Sunday ministries principally using the United Reformed Church on Quadrant Road which they are very generously letting us use free on Sundays. However it has become apparent that even *our existing space is inadequate* for our crèche and Sunday school needs (crèche has recently had to turn away visitors and some of our own families regularly have to meet in the 'Bawl Room' (our sound proof room where we can view the service). . This lack of space for full Sunday programmes means that to during the redevelopment process we would have to double up on the available space.

However this requirement *happens to coincide with a number of indicators* that suggest that two morning services might accomplish other goals we have as a church. We are *committed to church growth* and those who have studied these issues long and hard have identified tell tale signs of key moments when a strategic move can facilitate new growth. One of these is the principle that when a building is around 70% full it is in fact full. We have been running this full for some time now. In fact statistically we have noticed a pattern emerge. On any given Sunday when the church feels full, the following Sunday we can drop as much as 100 attendees (recently there was 125 of a difference), then there is a slow build up till we hit another full Sunday. This pattern (of full Sunday, fall and slow upward movement) is obvious to me looking from the front and is now confirmed by a statistical study. I have been here before in a previous pastorate and at that point we moved to two services.

Another principle has to do with *comfortable space*. In our case it is obvious that newcomers prefer to sit downstairs in the auditorium and are often embarrassed if there is no space here. One resolution to this would be for more of our regulars to sit in the gallery and I'm glad to say that the gallery has been filling steadily. The coffee time after the morning service is also a difficult time. I know that parents with young children who are harassed on Sundays in any case find it even more harassing to try and control their children in a confined space among milling crowds. Coffee time at present is simply not a nice experience for some of them.

The other principle has to do with *Parking*. This one issue can seriously damage a church's ability to grow. We are fortunate to have access to 30 free parking in resident spaces around the Green, plus 70 spaces in the Magistrates Car Park. There are now many more permits for these spaces out to people that attend than there are spaces. Although there is free all day parking within a ten minute walk of the church (off Kew Road and in St. Margaret's) most people want to park near the church, this is particularly so for visitors and first timers.

What will going to two services achieve?

It will meet the *immediate need* for space for children's work. Crèche and Promiseland already have space problems.

It will need the *anticipated need* for more space during the redevelopment.

It will give us *choices about what time* to come and worship together. Young children are often up early and get hungry around 12, making getting to church so late on a Sunday a fraught experience. Often people who have to leave London on Sunday to visit parents miss out on a church service to do so.

It will give us *one more opportunity to invite friends* and to build up the church in more comfortable surroundings.

It will help with *the parking crisis*. Moving to two services will allow everyone at the first service to park for free near the church and will release the free parking spaces around the Green and in the Magistrates Car Park for those coming to the 11.15 am service.

It will help *those who struggle* in the crowds around the building at the moment.

It will mean *more of us can use our gifts* to help in our various ministries and some involved at the moment will have the choice of both servicing and getting under the ministry of the word. In fact some of us who have been sitting quietly nursing our gifts will need to help out.

It will also mean for those who come to the early service that *the roads* will be quieter for travel to and from church, and *parking* will be free and available round the Green. It will release more space for visitors in the Magistrates Court for the later services.

It will set us on a *trajectory towards more growth* than is possible at present – in fact, if it is God's will it would allow us to grow to twice our current attendance.

What will the two services programme look like?

We hope to *start the two services* in late September, in other words letting us all get back from holiday and get ourselves organised before it begins, so that we do it all together.

The *first service* will meet from 9.30 to 10.45 at the latest

The *second service* will meet from 11.15 to 12.30 at the latest

Coffee will be served from 10.30 to 11.10 so that those leaving one service and those arriving at the second may meet and mingle and relationships be kept up.

Each service would have *the same sermon and songs* and would have a full programme of ministries including crèche and Sunday school. This means that no-one is going to miss out on anything. The *same quality* will be maintained for both. Some of the details of this will need to be ironed out, but it should not present a problem when we are determined to make it work.

What will two services require?

It will require all of us to catch the excitement of moving from *maintenance mode into mission mode*. Of all the mission challenges we face in the 21st century recapturing Britain for Christ (starting in our nation's capital) is the most strategic and challenging. In

some ways our global mission depends on us growing a strong mission minded church at home.

It is an opportunity for us all to *use the gifts* God has given us. We will need *more workers* for our children's programme, for coffee, and for stewarding.

It will give many of us *the opportunity to serve and to worship*. The incentive however is that if you've been holding back because you didn't want to miss a service then this is your lucky day! You will be able to do both! In fact we've worked it out that for the band they could come at 9 as usual, play for the bulk of both services and leave at the sermon in service 2, around 15 later than our service currently ends!!!

It will require us all to *work at building up these two new opportunities* in order to build two great congregations. I think you will come to see that in strategic terms this could be one of the most significant things we do in the next few years to help with church growth.