

Christ Church Communiqué



The Monthly Newsletter of Christ Church

April/May 2007

The Road Ahead

It would be difficult for anyone to consider, even briefly, the first eighteen months of Christ Church's history and come away with anything other than a sense of profound awe and gratitude for all that God has done in and through His church. In a short period, we have seen God provide and accomplish so much in our midst.

How we thank God for a faithful, humble, gracious, and growing Body of believers who genuinely love God and one another. We thank Him, too, for the provision of useful worship, educational, and administrative space. We thrill at the opportunity to worship God in spirit and truth; to drink deeply from the Word of God in every worship service, ministry, and class; and to grow in our faith and be stretched in our service. We rejoice over those who have been exposed and responded to the full-orbed presentation of the Gospel from our pulpit, ministries, and lives. And we are humbled to see how God has provided for His own at every turn—exceedingly abundantly beyond anything that we could have thought or asked. Truly, the presence of the Lord is in this place.

But there is more—much more. Indeed, we have just begun, and our future looks even brighter than our past. But how could it be otherwise? God established Christ Church, and it is He who directs our steps for the cause of His own good pleasure and will. So, what does the future hold? Though I can't know in whole, I believe that I know in part. Let me take this issue of the Communiqué to lay out a few things that we may expect in the months ahead.

Immediate Plans

Youth Ministries

We have seen the Lord continue to add families to Christ Church with junior high, high school, and college-aged young people, and we have reached the point where we need to give immediate attention to these families and their students. As we well know, our youth are growing up in a world very different from the one that most of us knew as young people. While we questioned what was true, our youth today are wondering if

"Declaring the preeminence of Christ in all things, to the glory of God in everything, and for the joy of all peoples everywhere."

there is truth. We respected authority; today's youth respect authenticity. We believed that principles were fixed, absolute, and trustworthy; students today view the world as relative, provisional, and tentative. We knew that there was a God; most young people today merely hope that we are right.

I hear about it in my office and see it in the faces of parents—they are concerned for their children, and they are looking to the church to help provide them with informed answers and solid instruction to ground their youth in truth, wisdom, and righteousness. It is little wonder that we have seen many families with young people pass through our doors as guests, only to land elsewhere. They are looking for people and ministries that will assist them and their children in accomplishing what seems nearly impossible to their minds—to see their children walk faithfully with Christ as solid, maturing, well-balanced and informed men and women of character who have a passion for God, His glory, and holiness in their lives. And we must, and will, respond to these needs.

As such, we will hold an exploratory meeting on Monday evening 30 April at 700P for all interested high school and college-aged students, their friends and parents, and all interested adults who would like to consider working as sponsors, mentors, and teachers with our youth. We will also invite those families with young people who have visited Christ Church during the past year to join us, as we openly discuss the needs and opportunities of walking with our young people through these most challenging and formidable years in their lives.

Music Ministries

How grateful we are for the talented people whom the Lord has brought to Christ Church. I am continually amazed at the breadth and depth of giftedness that the Lord has entrusted to us, and the continual and humble willingness of His people to serve and honor Him through their time and talents in our midst. Of particular note (no pun intended) has been the fine musicianship that we appreciate each week from our pianists, vocalists, and occasional musicians who invite us to join them in worshipping God and exalting Christ.

Surely music is an important vehicle through which God's people offer praise and adoration, and in keeping with the character of the One whom we love and worship, we are committed to excellence in our public worship. The demands of an excellent music ministry are great and we are straining our present resources in this vital area of ministry. As such, we are praying for God's leading and provision of a part-time director of music ministries who can assess our resources, organize them, develop them, and facilitate our time of worship through music. To this end, I have written to a number of seminaries and Bible colleges inquiring about graduates in the Bay Area who might be available to serve in this capacity. I invite you to join me in prayer as we ask the Lord to lead us in this next step of development in our music ministry.

Community Engagement

What ought the Church to be doing? Well, we ought to be busy doing what Jesus would be doing if He were physically present with us today. And what would Jesus be doing? Well, one only needs to read a little ways into the Gospels to discover Jesus spending prolonged periods of time in prayer with His Father, and spending much of His remaining time engaged with people in the public square. Jesus is our example, and such ought to spur each of us to be men and women of prayer and public witness.

In an effort to model our Savior's engagement with the people of the prevailing culture, we will be hosting a series of open community forums at Coffee Beans and Bistro (401 Main St., Pleasanton) from 700-900P beginning Monday 7 May. Throughout the summer, we have reserved this coffee house for the first Monday evening of every month (except August, when we will meet the second Monday evening) to which we will invite the community to join with us and begin discussing life's ultimate questions—"Is there a God?" "Is there truth and can truth be known?" "What is the meaning of life?" and "Was Jesus anything more than a good man?"

This series of open discussions is being advertised on television, radio, and in the print media, and we are praying that God would see fit to use this as an opportunity to build bridges with thinking skeptics who might not otherwise be interested in "churchy" things. With that in mind, allow me to offer a few words of clarification.

The open community forums will be just that—an open opportunity for all walks and kinds of people to gather and discuss, ask questions, debate, and share their thoughts. This is not designed as a "Christian" event; rather, it is the unbeliever who is in primary view here. Furthermore, we will not be doing any "bait and switch" kinds of maneuvers or using this as a veiled evangelistic presentation. No one likes being "set-up." Moreover, this is neither a Bible study nor a Gospel crusade.

Rather, we aim to raise *real* questions with *real* people who represent the prevailing secular worldview and who may have little, if any, appreciation for Christianity. Further, we will be engaging the prevailing postmodern worldview consistent with its own sensibilities, and allowing the discussion to proceed in a very natural way based upon a secular understanding of reality. In other words, we will engage with the unbeliever on his or her terms, not ours.

Maybe the Gospel will come up...maybe not...that's not the immediate objective. Someone may ask a question about the Bible, but this has not been designed as a forum to explore what the Bible has to say about any given subject and, since it is not recognized by the unbelieving world as inspired or authoritative, it will not be assumed as inspired or authoritative for our purposes in this context (In fact, you may wish to leave your Bible at home or in your car for these forum discussions, so as to not signal a disingenuous intent or ulterior motive).

Importantly, we don't want to see these forums become a "Christians" versus "pagans" debate. As such, and as moderator, be forewarned that I will critique weak and poorly-argued "Christian" contributions as aggressively as I will critique weak and poorly-argued agnostic/atheist contributions. Intellectual honesty demands this.

In the end, I am hoping that the intellectual coherence of Christians and the Christian faith will be demonstrated by the open, honest, insightful, and rational manner in which the questions are raised and discussed. And, should the Lord allow, I am praying that there may be some with whom we might have opportunity to share the Gospel.

We will offer complimentary coffee to all first-time participants and we will have some free books related to the evening's topic on hand for anyone who may wish to do a little extra reading between sessions. So plan now on attending, and invite some friends to join us as we take up these most important and pressing questions.

Intermediate Plans

Facilities

As previously mentioned, we thank God for His provision of useful worship space on Sunday mornings. However, as convenient and serviceable as this has been, we look forward to a day when Christ Church will have a home to call its own. Such will allow us to combine our public worship, administrative, educational, and ministry space, and open up daily opportunities for training, study, and ministry so that God's Kingdom might advance more effectively and efficiently, both locally and around the globe, through the vision and work that He has entrusted to us.

We presently have a facilities team that has been keeping an eye on available space in the tri-valley area, and we look forward to occasional briefings from them as the Lord provides. We will also establish a facilities line-item in the budget that will allow people to designate gifts beyond their regular tithes and offerings for this cause. We will want to be nimble and have available resources on hand so that we can secure and develop suitable property when the Lord provides the same.

Conclusion

Our first eighteen months as a church family have been thrilling and rewarding. We have seen people gathered, God worshipped, Christ exalted, the Spirit move, friendships formed, ministries established, the Gospel proclaimed, the community engaged, minds stretched, hearts fed, lives changed, giftedness exercised, and much more. What an awesome God we serve...and we praise Him—and Him alone—for all that He has accomplished in, and with, and through His people at Christ Church.

The next eighteen months look more thrilling still. Surely, as we are faithful to Him and His calling, He will be faithful to us and extend our reach for the cause of His own glory. God's at work at Christ Church. So, hang on...great things lay ahead!

Grace and peace,

Robert W. Evans

June Issue: Open Questions



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