

## GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND

1.2.15

### **Feedback from the Christ Central leaders' conference - Joss Bray**

We need to set the scene and have a quick recap first of all.

#### **So what is Christ Central? -**

Christ Central came from Newfrontiers around 3 years ago when apostolic spheres were started.

Newfrontiers itself was started around 40 years ago by Terry Virgo on the South Coast of England and it had grown to around 1000 churches all over the world - and present on every continent. The Newfrontiers family of churches had got too big for one man leadership and it was decided to delegate apostolic responsibility to a group of men who were already working with Terry Virgo who had been leading it.

There are at least 6 spheres now - spreading all over the world and they are built on relationships that the churches have with the apostolic men heading up each of the spheres. These men meet up regularly and work together - and Newfrontiers continues as a family of churches with shared values, although without a significant central administration or oversight.

We are in Christ Central - the nearest other churches to us are the Darlington and Teesside churches - and there are around 100 churches in all. Other Christ Central churches are in Cumbria, North Yorkshire, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, USA, Canada, Sweden and Norway, Tanzania and Zambia. Several of the other churches are also called Gateway.

The UK grouping grew out of the "North" region of Newfrontiers and to make it more confusing, other Newfrontiers churches nearer to us are in different spheres - so Hope Church Bedlington (which was County Church Northumberland) and City Church Newcastle are in Catalyst and Emmanuel Church Durham are in Regions Beyond.

Christ Central is led by Jeremy Simpkins who used to lead the North regional Newfrontiers group and we have known him and his wife Anne for many years.

Spheres have their own annual conferences now - Christ Central's one is called Devoted and is in Newark in August. This will be the first one there - the last one was "North" in North Yorkshire, 2 years ago and had been going on for several years before that.

### **The leaders and wives conference**

Every year, leaders and wives get together for fellowship, worship and teaching. Last weekend we were in Crewe - with around 140 people. Nearly all were from the UK Christ Central churches. Myself and Gill were there last weekend.

It was hosted by Jeremy and Anne Simpkins. We have actually just invited them to come up to us here at Gateway Northumberland. They are very keen to do this and we will be fixing a date hopefully in the near future.

The invited speakers were Mark and Nesta Mumford from the Salt and Light stream of churches. They have been leading the same church in Derby for 35 years. Salt and Light have been very close to Newfrontiers with their vision and values and have built up good relationships over the years. It was good to have "external" people come and help us and speak into the Christ Central sphere and there was a very good atmosphere trust, love and respect.

### **So what happened?**

Here are some headlines from the teaching and also prophetic words spoken to us which are also applicable to the church and Christ Central as a whole.

### **Servant leadership**

Mark felt strongly that Christ Central churches would be characterised by leaders with servant hearts. He said there are no superstars or big names. God feeds power into a heart like that. It is the sort of leadership that Jesus showed - servant leadership. Jesus came not to be served but to serve. That will be the sort of family of churches we will be.

## **Call and calling**

There was also teaching on our call and our calling. There is an importance in not just feeling called by God to do something - but also in the ongoing calling. It shouldn't be a one off but should continue and endure in our lives.

This was also specifically prophesied for us - and by extension for the church here. People prayed for us and someone felt that God was saying that the call we had was right and that it was still our calling, and it is still right. For us, I felt it meant that when we felt called up here to this area to help build the church, that call was valid. And that calling is still valid. You may remember the picture that Jeremy gave me and Gill two years ago when we were struggling with the change in direction at County Church.

We had originally, several years previously, got onto a bus with a destination and number on the front. That was County Church, and the church planting vision was particularly for the AIn Valley. That number on the bus had changed - the destination had changed. We needed to get off and get back on a bus which was going in the direction we were called to go - with the original number on the front - going to the original destination.

I felt very reassured by knowing our call and calling were right and still applicable. It is really good to have God speak through other people like this - especially when they don't necessarily know the background. And of course, this reassures us as a church family that we are in God's will - on the right road, as we travel it together.

## **Keep going**

This was also specifically prophesied to us. What was said was - "don't think that this is it for numbers - you may think "is this it" or even "this is it we won't grow any more". This is not the case. Keep walking on - keep going. And don't say "we can't cope with more numbers" - because that is not right either. It was really encouraging to hear this. The temptation can be to lose momentum and not see what God is going to do - how he will build His church. We are called to keep walking forward - not running, but walking - and the God will build His church. I really don't know how we got to 30 (when everyone is here) from 4 people nearly 2 years ago. God must have done it! And He will continue to do it.

## **People will be drawn in because we are like Jesus**

This was taught and prophesied from the front and it has to apply to us as a church. Maybe this is a reason why we have grown! People have got a glimpse of Jesus here amongst us and want to know him more.

In Philippians 2 v 5 it says “your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”. This is the heart of it.

What was Jesus’s attitude?

Firstly, He loved God and was obedient to him as his heavenly father.

Secondly, he loved those around him - in fact he loved so much that he gave his life for them - and for us.

Thirdly, he served those around him - he healed the sick, preached good news, championed the poor and needy, welcomed the outsider - lepers, prostitutes and tax collectors. He even washed his friends’ feet. He showed the world a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven. He kept on teaching - the Kingdom of heaven is near - and he kept on demonstrating it in powerful ways.

Do those things sound familiar? This church’s mission is this - to Love God, love each other and serve the community. That is what was built in right at the beginning.

Exciting isn’t it! - We are here to show people what Jesus is like - to bring the good news of the kingdom of God. Here it is possible to have new life, a new start, forgiveness, purpose and a future, and to know God’s transforming love in our lives.