

## **Discussion paper about creating Gospel Growth Opportunities through making changes to our 9.30am and 6pm services**

*Mittagong Anglican Church      May 2015  
A paper written by Richard Mills*

### **1. Aim of this discussion paper**

To share some thoughts on creating opportunities for gospel growth at our church in relation to the present 9.30 and 6pm services. We are aiming for Gospel growth in our community. This means our church being used by God to assist people who are already Christians to grow in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Also under the sovereignty of God we desire to proclaim to gospel to an increasing number of people, so that more will put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as ruler and saviour of their lives.

This aim is in accord with both our Vision Statement and Biblical teaching.

#### **a. Our Vision statement is :**

*Knowing Christ    Growing in Christ    Showing Christ to the world*

#### **b. Biblical Teaching**

##### **Matthew 28:19-20**

*Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Jesus commands us to have as the core activity of the church the process of *Making Disciples*, which is the active verb in this passage.

##### **Colossians 1:28-29**

*We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. <sup>29</sup> To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*

The process of helping people to become mature believers in Christ is hard work and costly at times. Paul labours hard at doing it and so should we!!!

### **2. Proposal**

We would like to encourage a number of people to switch from the 9.30am church service to our evening service, which will be changed from 6pm to 5.30pm. This would create space for new people to join our 9.30am service and also help develop our 5.30pm service with its youth and young adults focus.

The present 6pm service has experienced recent growth with more young adults attending than for a long time. We are planning to keep the present flavour of Sunday at Six but hopefully grow the number attending.

At the 5.30pm service while the sermon is on, we will have a Sunday Kids class for those children attending, particularly catering for those in school years 4 to 6. With the inclusion of more people at 5.30pm, we would create a bigger service that will be more attractive for new people to join.

We also are planning to change our pattern of sermon series. There will be one sermon by a preacher at the 8am and 11am services. There will be a different sermon and preacher at both the 9.30am and 5.30pm services.

### **3. Who sets the service times?**

In the Sydney Diocese Anglican church the Senior Minister sets the times for the church services. These proposed changes were suggested to me by a couple of people and I am going through a process of consulting with people and receiving feedback about the proposed change.

I first discussed the proposed changes with Matthew Brooks-Lloyd and Graham Rose who is the Senior Minister's churchwarden. Then they were raised with Parish Council. After that I contacted some people from the 9.30am and 6pm church services who were most likely to be effected by the changes. Then we have given this paper out to everyone in the church.

Richard Mills will be available to meet with people to discuss the proposal.  
(See below in point 11 for more information about these meetings)

### **4. Our Present situation with the 9.30am service**

The 9.30 service is regularly hitting a physical barrier in capacity that will soon prevent continued growth in numbers attending. This service is often full. On Sunday 3rd May it was comfortably full and we counted more than 14 families who were away. Church growth studies show when a congregation reaches 80% of its capacity in a building it plateaus.

The issue of the number of people attending is indeed a great problem to have and we rejoice that God has brought so many people to our 9.30am service in recent years. However the increased numbers attending has raised issues such as not having enough seats at times and large numbers in our Sunday kids classes. Also people don't often know each other in this service, don't notice if others are away and don't feel missed if they don't attend regularly..

### **5. Some options about ways forward, that have been considered.**

#### **a. Do nothing.**

Change will affect people and we could do nothing in the hope that we don't upset people. However this option, although easy in the short term in terms of lack of disruptions, is at odds with both our vision statement and the Biblical teaching given above.

#### **b. Solve the Physical limitation**

This is not really practical as the hall takes up as much of site as possible. (Council regulations limited the size and seating capacity of our hall when we built it in 2006-2007). Moving offsite would mean we would lose our wonderful strategic location right in the middle of Mittagong.

#### **c. Start another service like the 9.30 service**

##### **i. At Colo Vale**

We have tried this a few times and the facilities are not nearly as good. While we are open to trying this again in the future it did not provide a viable alternative family service in its most recent incarnation, Saturday afternoons from Oct 2014 to January 2015.

##### **ii. Start another contemporary church service at Mittagong.**

- Sunday morning - we already have 3 services on Sunday mornings. Both the 8am and 11am services are working well and we would be reluctant to change. When we had an overlap of service times with 9.30am and 10.30am it created logistical problem such as parking.

- Saturday afternoon/Saturday evening There are often other events on at this time such as weddings, parish socials and family activities.
- Sunday afternoon at 4pm. Five church services on one day would be too much for ministry staff, plus our Youth group Crossroads is on at this time.

iii. Encouraging some people from 9.30 to move to a changed evening/ afternoon service held at 5.30pm. This service would be similar in style to 9.30am, have the same preacher and sermon, yet retain the youth and young adult emphasis of the present 6pm service. There is also the advantage of the service already existing, so that we do not have to start from scratch. We already have a number of youth, young adults, families, couples and single people attending this service.

**This seems to me the best option but this paper is a proposal and I encourage feedback.**

## **6. We need to make changes as our area is growing**

Our population is growing. New development in areas such as Renwick, Nattai Ponds, Willow Vale, Mittagong and other locations are bringing many new people into our area.

Also our church is making an increasing impact in our area through our activities such as cubby clubs, after school kids clubs, youth groups, outreach events, website and personal evangelism that is bringing new people to our church.

## **7. Who are we encouraging to consider making the change from 9.30pm to 5.30pm.**

Anyone is welcome to make the change. However we are especially encouraging those with children aged about 10 to 18 who presently attend the 9.30 service, to consider making the change to the 5.30pm church service.

## **8. Growth is costly in terms of relationships**

Change is difficult for many people. To make a change in the time you attend a service is not easy and may well be not as convenient as at present. It may well be costly in terms of loss of regular relationships which people now enjoy.

However we are asking people, to consider making the change, for the sake of the spread of the gospel. It would be much easier to do nothing but this may indeed inhibit gospel growth at our church.

Please bear in mind that we have made changes to service times in the past. We have also in the past encouraged people to change service times and locations. I have been the Senior Minister at Mittagong Anglican for ten and a half years. During this time the following changes have occurred:

*9.45am service changed to 10am*

*10am service became 2 services 9.30 and 11am*

*11am service changed to 10.30am then back to 11am*

*Some from the 10am were part of a church plant at Colo Vale*

*Colo Vale services have been at 10.45am, 8am, 4pm, 2pm and Saturday 4.30pm at both St Pauls and Colo Vale public school.*

To try and maintain some already existing relationships we will be looking at the possibility of doing more regular events that bring together people from both the

9.30am and 5.30pm congregations such as Parish Dinners, picnics, men's events and women's events.

Obviously people are very welcome to relate to friends and to be hospitable regularly during the week. Some home groups will have people from both church services.

Please give suggestions to the ministry staff team.

### **9. Reasons for Changing the existing 6pm service to 5.30pm**

The 6pm service is the most similar in style to 9.30 in terms of style of service, bands which play similar music, use of audio visual elements for creeds and confession, communion, same location. They are similar in feel and atmosphere. So it makes most sense to suggest some people from 9.30am move to 5.30pm.

Also the 6pm service has stayed at an attendance between 25 and 50 people for the past ten years. When the service has had a large attendance (about 50) from time to time it has a more vibrant feel and is more attractive for new people to stay. But each year we regularly lose people from this service as they move away to study or work in Sydney or Wollongong. If we could have a service with a regular attendance of at least initially 70 to 80, it would be more conducive for gospel growth.

The reason for the change time from 6pm to 5.30pm is that by starting slightly earlier we think it may make it easier for families to attend. This is especially families with kids in year 4 upwards. We would finish the service by 6.45pm and then if people stay for supper they could be home by 7.15pm to 7.30pm.

We will be encouraging our Crossroads youth group to still meet at 4 and finish by 5.20 which will encourage a flow straight into church. Our musicians might have their Band practice from maybe 3.15pm – 4pm

We will be aiming to keep the style of the present 6pm service (eg including youtube clips/games/interviews etc.) We acknowledge that it is very important for the existing 6pm service people to keep ownership and true youth/young adult tone of the service. So we will continue to have Chocolate Club & Crossroads upfront involvement. (eg leading/ music/ reading/ prayers/ welcomers/ sound/supper)

As we will be finishing earlier we will encourage simple meals on a regular basis (eg monthly such as BBQs or soup and rolls)

We will have a Sunday kids class, held while the sermon is on, This class will be aimed at kids in school years 4 to 6.

We will be aiming to be a service where young people can see a progression of being actively involved in Christian fellowships as they progress through childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. (eg Sunday Kids, High School Youth Group, Young Adults)

### **10. Sermon series**

At present we usually have two sermon series on a Sunday. One passage, sermon and preacher at 8am, 9.30am and 11am and there is a different passage sermon and preacher at 6pm.

We are intending to change this to :

one passage, sermon and preacher at 8am and 11am

one passage, sermon and preacher at 9.30am and 5.30pm

There are a number of benefits to such a change. These include people in home groups hearing the same sermon and the sermon at the contemporary services being able to use more audio visual items such as film clips and modern

songs as illustrations. Also the 8am and 11am services will have sermons more geared to the age demographic of the majority of the people who attend these services.

### **11. Meetings to discuss proposed changes**

Smaller meetings seem to work better so that more people get an opportunity to say things and ask questions. So I am happy to meet with people

May 31st Sunday evening after church (for the present 6pm service)

Weeknight meetings at church Thursday May 28th 7.30pm

Monday June 1st 7.30pm

Also people are welcome to invite me to come to their place in the next few weeks or to talk to me by phone or email

### **12. When are we looking at implementing the change**

We would like to have time for people to discuss and process the idea of the change. A possible starting date for the changes could be on Sunday 19th July.

(This will be the first Sunday after mid- year school holidays)

Please think, discuss and pray about the proposed changes.

Richard Mills