

Purpose and Focus of and for Shaw Church

Knowing Jesus, Sharing God's Love, Caring for People



Introduction

As we move forward in our life together and ministry at Shaw Church, it seems appropriate to have a Statement of Vision/Mission that captures who we are and focuses where we are going.

There are two parts to a statement of Purpose and Focus:

1. a short and memorable phrase or Tag Line that captures the essence of the more complete statement; and provides a 'who we are' phrase so others can see what we are about.
2. A longer reflection on what makes us tick, helps anchor the various things we are doing, and helps us locate things we might do within our vision of what God wants us to be and do.

Identifying our Purpose and Focus

Our Purpose and Focus reflects who we are and the desires of our hearts. It is something we believe God has given us, in Shaw, that leads us to participate in the growing of his Kingdom. "for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose." (Philippians 2:13).

The Key: God's Love for us

We are responding to the Love of God – a love we don't deserve but that God has lavished on us (1 John 3:1).

Our Purpose and Focus is about our response to God's love, in three dimensions:

Because of God's love for us, *we know Jesus*

Because of God's love for us, *we share God's love*

Because of God's love for us, *we care for people*

And is declared in a simple tag-line of:

Knowing Jesus, Sharing God's Love, Caring for People

Three dimensions flowing from knowing God's Love for us:

Knowing Jesus

Because of God's Love, *we Know Jesus*, and so we worship Him as the Son of God. We focus on Jesus, the Son of God because He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15), who came down from heaven (John 6:38). We recognise God, by his own self-revelation, to be One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and we become disciples as we participate in the divine nature (1 Peter 1:3) and as we allow God to work in our wills and our actions.

Reflection

Aeroplane safety recognises the need to put your own oxygen mask on before you help others (or you'll soon be unable to help anyone else).

In the same way, a Christian's relationship with God must come first; (Matt 4:10) otherwise we are simply the blind leading the blind (Luke 6:39, Matt 7:3-5).

Worship is an appropriate response when we recognise God for who He is: our creator (Gen 1:26), our sustainer (Matt 6:25-33), our redeemer (John 1:27), and our Lord (John 20:28).

The form of worship is less important than the fact and act of worship.

We Worship as we gather to focus on God and on his love for us, and as we read his word to us (as we do on Sunday mornings and at other times); we also worship God by the way our lives are transformed to live as Jesus would have us live (Rom 12:2), following his commands (1 John 2:3), being his people (Col 3:12), and loving others as he loves us (John 13:34). And so we recognise both the need to meet together (Heb 10:25) and to be ever-learning disciples of Christ (2 Pet 1:5-7, Gal 5:22-25).

Sharing God's Love

God's Love is an invitation and we want others to *Share the Love of God* too. Knowing God compels us to be witnesses of who God is and what He has done (Luke 24:48). And so we invite others to come and hear the Good News of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:19) and we welcome all who come near to God, knowing that sinners can be saved.

Reflection

We believe Jesus Christ is Good News for us and for the people around us (Mark 1:15). The Good News is about God's Love, shown to the world in Jesus, the Christ (John 3:16), who died and was raised to life (Rom 4:25); Good news is to be shared (Acts 1:8) because it leads to people being saved (1 Pet 1:9). Sharing Good News sounds simple, and can be when you just 'chat' about it.

But it is also quite complex, because God's Good News is about more than simply telling people – it's about telling people in such a way that they realise this is Good News *for them*, and that they can and should *respond* to it (Acts 2:40-41). We sometimes talk about the church in terms of widening circles: a centre of people who believe, who gather to worship regularly, and who (while knowing they are still sinners) try to live the way of God's commandments; outside that is an inner fringe of people who may believe and who gather to worship occasionally and who have an aspiration to live the way of Jesus; then there is an outer fringe of people who know we are here and sometimes join us, but for whom faith in God is an inherited tradition or a relic of the past rather than something real and immediate and dynamic that comes from knowing God's Love. And outside these circles is the big wide world of people who have no interest – but who are still people made in the image of God and who God wants to hear and respond.

The church is here to encourage people to move inwards as they respond to the loving invitation of God to enter his Kingdom (Matt 7:21, John 3:5).

Another model we can use is the fountain of God's love and grace: this love and grace is not limited in terms of who can receive but, when we do receive, we have the opportunity and responsibility to receive it ourselves *and* to let it overflow from us and through us, to others.

Caring for People

God's love in our hearts overflows to the those around us and this is shown by our *Care for People*. We show our care by working to bring the values and principles of God into our world where they are too-often lacking. In practical terms this is seen through our commitment and action for truth, peace, hope, healing, mercy, and justice.

Reflection

Being a Christian is not only a matter of our faith and personal relationship with God, it affects our relationships with those around us. In response to Jesus' call for us to be the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13) we seek to bring God's love, values and principles into all our relationships in this world. We believe God made the world and that he made it so that living His way is best for all. Our response is to do to others as we would have them do to us (Matt 7:12), seek justice and righteousness (Matt 5:6), be merciful (Matt 5:7), make peace (Matt 5:9), love our enemies (Matt 5:44), feed the hungry (Matt 25:35), and much more; and we do this because of the living hope we have in Christ (1 Pet 1:3).