



6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost

30<sup>th</sup> June 2024

## What's God's purpose for His church?

I'd like to start with a question:

What is the one activity that more than 2 billion people all around the world engage in on a regular weekly basis?

If you thought watching a sports game, I totally understand, given the crowds we see on TV each week.

But that's not it. It is actually attending church!

Does that surprise you? It surprised me when I heard it.

I wonder why more than 2 billion people make it a habit to attend church each week around the world.

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We could expect them to respond, "Why do you go to church?"

Even if it is a legitimate question, it is often hard to answer.

You even may find yourself muttering, 'well, it is just what I do ....'

But, when it is cold and rainy outside, and your PJs are really comfy... the tug in your heart makes you realise – there is more to coming to Church than just something to do on Sunday morning.

So, 'Why do we come to church?'

Let's stop for half a minute and ask the person next to you, 'why did you come to church today?'

*[allow 30 seconds for talking]*

What kind of answers did people hear?

*[allow 1 minute for responses]*

If you struggled to articulate a really good response, don't worry. You're not alone!

And be assured, even if you can't come up with a great answer – you made the right decision by being here anyway!

However, it **IS** important to know **WHY** God desires that we meet together.

It **IS** also important to know whether or not we are fulfilling God's purposes for His church.

So, over the next few weeks, I'd like us to rediscover:

- **WHO** God has called us to be,
- **WHY** He has called us,
- and **WHAT** He has called us to do.

If I was to ask you what the dominant analogy used in the Scriptures to describe God's church, it wouldn't take long for you to identify it is that of a 'body' (Ephesians 1:23).

Just like our human body is made up of many different systems, which need to work harmoniously in order for the body to be healthy, Christ's body, the church, also has different systems, all designed to fulfil different purposes.

Think about it ... there's the nervous system, the muscular system, the respiratory system, the skeletal system, to name a few. If one of these systems gets out of whack, it throws the entire system out of balance.

It is the same in Christ's body, the Church.

God designed Christ's body to fulfil five purposes, which fulfill the five needs that all His children have.

Let me say that again, because it is important.

Every human has five spiritual needs, and God designed Christ's church to fulfil every one of those needs.

*You simply can't be a healthy member of Christ's body if you're not a committed member of Christ's church!*

So, let's brainstorm: What do you think are our five **spiritual**?

*[Allow people to call out their suggestions]*

You've all mentioned really good things.

The five spiritual needs of every person are:

1. **Worship**: Every person was planned for God's pleasure, and anything that brings pleasure to God is considered worship.
2. **Fellowship**: Every person was formed to become a member and belong to God's family.
3. **Discipleship**: Every person was created to grow from spiritual childhood to adulthood by become like Jesus Christ.
4. **Ministry**: Every person has been shaped by God to serve Him and His family.
5. **Mission**: God created His children to fulfil His mission, which involves sharing our faith and the love of Christ with others.

So, how do we fulfil these needs?

Although it is correct to say, "God meets all our spiritual needs", we must hold fast to the truth that God designed these needs to be fulfilled by each member of his family becoming a committed member of Christ's church body.

So, let's consider, what are the five great purposes which God has called His church to fulfil?

Ask yourself, 'what well-known verses immediately spring to mind?'

Of course, it is Christ's Great Commandments.

*"**Love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38)*

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And our love for God will impact how we relate with others in God's family. So, Jesus told us,

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The way we love our neighbour is how we serve God. That is our **MINISTRY** for God and with each other.

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Jesus also gave us a Great Commission:

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But, there is more. God’s children should not remain children. God’s children are called to grow up to maturity and this happens through the process called **DISCIPLESHIP**.

Of course, there are many ways we could express these five purposes. It is helpful to put them all together in one sentence.

Here is my first DRAFT:

*Southlakes Anglican’s purpose is to bring people to Jesus and into membership of God’s family, to grow in Christ-like maturity, and be equipped for ministry and mission both in the church and the world, so together, we glorify God in our lives.*

Can you write a better one? On the vision board on my left, why not have a go?

Let’s start by answering the question, “I am a member of Southlakes Anglican because ....”

OR “I come to church at Southlakes Anglican regularly because ... ”

You may like to write a response on the paper sitting on your seat. Then, we’ll pin them up on our board.

Over the next two months I’d like us to look more closely at each of these five purposes.

To be a balanced healthy church, we need to have goals and strategies which help us fulfil each one.

I’d like all of us to give some thought and prayer to how we can best fulfil these five purposes.

Obviously, some are easier than others.

We are already pretty good at WORSHIP.

But how good are we at adjusting our worship style, every once in a while, for those who may never have attended church, or haven’t attended for a long while?

I think this is an area we can improve.

What about DISCIPLESHIP? How committed are we to growing to maturity in Christ? Are we regularly meeting with others to learn more about what it means to grow to spiritual adulthood?

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And what about the dreaded word ... EVANGELISM. Even I, with my bubbly personality, find this difficult.

While I was the Summit, I learned of a new initiative which is being rolled out all around the world, which is doable and achievable for every one of us. I look forward to sharing about this in a few weeks.

There is much to unpack here. That’s why over the next two months, during July and August, we are going to look more closely at how we can ensure Southlakes Anglican remains a healthy church that continues to grow into the future.

Now, when any leader mentions the word ‘change’, people’s ears prick up on high alert. Some say, ‘Finally, at last!’ While say fearfully, ‘Oh No! Not change’.

So, here are some of my reassurances to those who find change difficult.

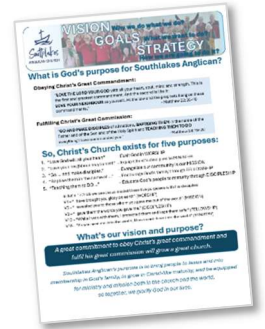
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## Learning about God's purposes for His Church

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Sunday, 21 <sup>st</sup> July	Why is membership of God's church more than just attending Sunday worship? <b>*hosts meet after church</b>	FELLOWSHIP
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<b>During August</b>		
Sunday, 4 <sup>th</sup> August	Why has God called every member to serve His church and the world?	MINISTRY
Sunday, 11 <sup>th</sup> August	How can we start sharing the good news of Jesus with our community?	MISSION
Sunday, 18 <sup>th</sup> August	How can we B.L.E.S.S. our community?	MISSION
Sunday, 25 <sup>th</sup> August	How can we serve our community by making a monthly Sunday worship service more welcoming and easier to understand?	MISSION

## Can you H.O.S.T. a small group in your home?

Commencing September, we are hoping to start a whole host of small groups in people's homes. There will be no 'leaders' as such, just group hosts. What do you need to be able to do to be a host?

Have a heart for people Open your home  
Serve tea/coffee Turn on your T.V.

If you're interested in being a small group host and want to learn how, there'll be a meeting after church on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> July and 28<sup>th</sup> July from 10.45 to 11.15 am.