

MINISTER'S REPORT

- I don't want this to be a boring "Annual Report" (SONA), but a charge – "This is who we are"; "This is where we need to be going."

WHO WE ARE:

- We are growing more into a community that acts together in faith, service and celebration: This has been given wonderful expression in the amazing Alpha Course, the 111th birthday party, the Emerge weekend, plus all sorts of other community activities and initiatives through this past year.
- We are a community learning to journey together making course corrections on the way and learning to depend on and trust one another: explicitly the intention through the November process and the Imbizos of this year; our push towards intergenerational worship and ministry; our new staffing appointments (appreciation to long-standing staff as well) and the questions regarding the use of our buildings as better platforms for ministry and community. This includes listening to one another and seeking to make course changes where necessary.
- We are a community learning to embrace change, even when it is painful; as we grapple with cultural, economic and generational challenges and accept that these will challenge us to reimagine how we function as a church. The past few years have brought many of these issues into much sharper focus, and these pressing issues will only intensify.
- We are a community with wounds. This past year has been particularly painful as we addressed the issues surrounding Mark Russell's being asked to stand down from ministry. It was a wounding time for many of us with some strongly divided opinions as to how church discipline needed to be applied. Relationships were strained in certain quarters, but sincere efforts have been made to restore them. As we reflect on this sad chapter let's seek to take on board the lessons it has to teach us. Seasons like this sound a renewed call to us to be a community of mutual grace and strengthening.

WHERE WE NEED TO BE GOING:

- A renewed focus on prayer and worship, both individual, but more particularly, corporate. A determined commitment to give centrality to God and to look consistently to his initiative. At the heart will be a monthly congregational gathering in a "concert of prayer" to continue the process of community discernment and to position ourselves in more committed

readiness to walk with the Lord in shared discipleship. We will also be working with the Prayer Course by Pete Grieg next year. At least termly, we will give the evening service completely to worship and waiting on the Lord. Other prayer initiatives are also being planned.

- Exploration of the path of intentional community with mission in all its redemptive dimensions at the core. Whatever we decide to do with 16 Summerley Rd., I believe the Lord is calling us to bring creativity and courage to this aspect of our life as a church.
- Enhanced shared testimonies around the theme of “Journeying through the Land Between”. There is great power in our stories as we root Christian discipleship in the honest process of daily obedience through seasons of hardship and perplexity as much as times when we feel blessed and the path is clear and simple. The rich Biblical material on wilderness and exile speaks with real power to our context and we will be drawing on these themes a lot in the coming year.
- It would be possible to give more weight than is due to some of the difficulties of the past year. On balance, there is far more that is positive than negative. Equally, let’s not grow overly discouraged at the financial challenges of this time. We keep our eyes fixed on the Lord and position ourselves with all diligence in a posture of attentiveness and responsiveness and draw our sense of purpose and hope from his sovereign faithfulness. Money has never determined the effectiveness of Jesus’ church.
- So I want to end with gratitude – to you the people of Christ Church; to the amazing staff; to a fine and diligent team of Wardens and Pastorate; and supremely to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whose service is our delight.

Rob Taylor
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