

St Johns Church Centre  
461 Kings Road  
SW10 0LU  
10th January, 2008

Dear

It's a new year and one and a half years since St Johns got re-launched. Time goes quickly! Moving down to World's End, we've quickly seen that there are many great Christians down here and much good work is already going on. Why, then, try to start a new church?

Well, there are still many people at World's End, and in the surrounding area, who don't know Jesus and who don't belong to a church. While there are so many in that situation, there is always a need for more churches that want to follow Christ. Research shows, apparently, that starting churches is the best way to reach people in neighbourhoods with the message of Jesus. The more churches, the more opportunities people have to connect with a church. The American pastor Bill Hybels is famous for saying that "the local church is the hope of the world", and I think he's right. Our aim has always been to build a church for local people, and especially for people who don't go to church. Our hope, though, is not just that we would be a great church, but that we would be a church that loves and serves the local community. We don't want to just enjoy ourselves in a 'holy huddle', but to see the local community changed by the kingdom of God.

As I look to the year ahead, the passage of Acts 2:42-47 has stuck out for me as a vision of what we should be looking for. Here we get a picture of the first church filled with the Holy Spirit right after Pentecost.

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

Surely, this has got to be the kind of St Johns we want to see in the year ahead. We see people who are devoted to the *Bible* (the apostles' teaching), to *deep relationships* and *generosity* with one another (the fellowship), to *sharing their homes* and *doing church in their homes* (breaking bread), and to *prayer*. This is what a Spirit-filled church looks like. Don't we long to be this kind of a church? Don't we want this

kind of spiritual life? Notice that when the Spirit is really working in us, we don't get just one of these things, but *all* of them at the same time. We don't want to be a church that's specializes only in one thing, like the Bible or relationships or prayer. We want to have it all.

The result of this kind of living church is natural growth. We're told that "the Lord added to their number daily..." Churches like this must grow and will grow. One of our big aims at St Johns is "to give everyone in the local area repeated opportunities to hear the message about Jesus in a form that is attractive and which they can understand." We cannot be content to simply exist, we want to see the church grow and influence the local area for good. This kind of church is not just a dream, nor is it unrealistic. Otherwise, the Bible would not hold out to us this story from Acts. Of course, we will always be sinners saved by the grace of God alone and we will always live with many wrong things in our churches (as did the first churches). Yet, God's Spirit can still do amazing things amongst us and we should be asking for Him to do so.

So, why not get stuck in to this vision this year? It says in the passage that the early Christians were "devoted" to all these things. They gave themselves to them and made sacrifices for them. We will never know the work of God's Spirit unless we devote ourselves to the local church. This is where God is at work. Let's hope and pray for big things at St Johns for this coming year.

in Christ,

*Andy*