

Lifestreams' Consultation: Aug 18th 2010

Background to Lifestreams' relocation

On the 22 July members of the St Barnabas' clergy team (Alister Hendery, Paul Stanaway and Andrew McDonald) met with head staff of Medbury School. At that meeting Peter Kaye, Principal of Medbury School, shared news of Medbury's plans to conduct major renovations of the Hall where Lifestreams currently worships.

Lifestreams will be unable to worship at Medbury from mid October 2010 to the end of January 2011. This means the parish must consider options for the relocation of Lifestreams' worship.

Initial Consultation for Lifestreams

In order to respond to this challenge appropriately, the Lifestreams' Team invited all members of the Lifestreams' congregation to share what they most valued about Lifestreams. This sharing took place during worship on August 1st.

The congregational feedback provides an essential "snapshot" of what values are essential to Lifestreams' cultural architecture at the present time. Individuals were asked to respond to positive rather than negative questions; therefore the picture it presents is broad and nuanced. Nevertheless it will be important to prayerfully consider this "snapshot" of Lifestreams' values as we discern the next steps for Lifestreams.

QUESTIONS DURING CONSULTATION

Process: In groups of four, people were invited to consider the following 6 key elements of Lifestreams' congregational life.

Worship (this may include our experience of God, the music, communion, the liturgy, the relaxed nature of the worship)

Teaching/Talks (this may include the activities and teaching at kidzone, bible-bashers, the sermon)

Community (welcome, fellowship, morning tea, relationships, home groups, families etc.)

Place of Worship (do we value the places in which we worship?)

Young People's Ministry (discipleship, friends, teaching, sharing, activities etc)

Mission (the opportunity to share our faith, to serve those need, to pursue what God is inspiring us to do in the world)

From this list we were invited to consider:

- 1) What 3 things do I value most about Lifestreams? (stars indicate levels of what is currently valued)
- 2) What is it about each of these things that I value? (comments provide primary insights)

Finally in response to our values we were invited to consider:

- 3) Where to from here for Lifestreams?

The results of this sharing process were displayed under appropriate headings and later collated by Angela Brown.

Three Key Areas

In Response to the first question, “What 3 things do I value most about Lifestreams?”, three key areas were highlighted. The following summaries are based on individual feedback during the consultation.

Young People’s Ministry (127 stars)

The desire to connect with families and young people was a key reason for the original founding of Lifestreams. Young people’s ministry is highly valued among Lifestreams; one person described it as the soul of the church. The high school group, Bible Bashers is led by Jessie and Jethro. This is deeply appreciated both by those who belong to it and by the wider congregation. One member of the group described it as having changed their life by providing good friendships beyond their school life. The focus on discipleship through group Bible study is a core aspect of Bible Bashers, as are the friendships and food they share. It was noted that we need to treasure and build on the ministry of Young people.

Kidzone provides age appropriate teaching and activities. It was noted that Kidzone provides an alive and fun way of nurturing faith in God early in life. The overall sense conveyed by music, and the intentionality of the congregation is of a family/child friendly atmosphere. There was some concern that the service used to be more children friendly. It will be essential to continue fostering a sense of all-age inclusion both in terms of worship, teaching, activities and the space in which we worship.

Community (85 stars)

Being part of a faith community is highly valued at Lifestreams. A focus on relationships, informality and atmosphere were highlighted as community building aspects of Lifestreams. There is also recognition that there is a lot more we can do to foster a greater sense of community. Suggestions range from increasing hospitality toward one another, developing home groups, sharing testimonies and doing community projects together.

The large morning tea space at Medbury has seen more people staying afterward and getting to know one another. At the same time many express a sense of lost connection with other members of St Barnabas’.

Worship (72 Stars)

Contemporary liturgy and music that is accessible to people of all ages is highly valued by members of Lifestreams. Music in particular provides an essential vehicle through which to offer worship, and often enables people to carry worship out into the week. It is not surprising, given the very up front nature of music in worship, that this aspect received the most varied feedback, with a higher level of “shoulds”. Many highlighted the need for stronger leadership in the singing. Others appreciated the choice and style of music. There are also diverse feelings over what constitutes appropriate behaviour and inclusion of children in worship.

Reflection on these three areas

Continuing to play to our strengths and building on these three key areas will be essential for Lifestreams as we face the future. It is important to remember that the number of stars is an indication of value and not simply how well we are doing! As I reflect on this it is essential to emphasise that each of these three areas must be undergirded with a strong Biblical understanding of what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Young people’s ministry, home groups and worship that culturally connects will be foundational for Lifestreams’ further growth.

Teaching, Mission, Place of Worship

In brief the following areas, although scoring lower, provided some important insights from the sharing process.

Teaching (64 stars)

There are diverse feelings over sermons at Lifestreams. Some members are pleased with the teaching content and style of talks; others request that they be more simple, understandable or challenging. There is a widespread desire to hear members of the congregation give talks and testimonies, as well as hear a greater diversity of preaching.

NB: It needs to be acknowledged that due to the current allocation of service times and clergy staffing at St Barnabas', Lifestreams has experienced a dramatic reduction in variety of speakers.

In future a higher number of regular lay testimonies and talks could be made with suitable training or preparation with Vicar and clergy team.

Mission (53 stars)

There were a number of good ideas regarding how we may reach out more into the wider community to serve. These included working more closely as a whole parish rather than "reinventing the wheel" as Lifestreams; of having special outdoor services and encouraging greater number of activities for people to do together; looking to mission at University, to elderly people or to remain focussed on youth ministry.

Place of Worship (9 stars)

While the facilities at Medbury have provided room for children and potential growth, there is a strong mood that returning to the St Barnabas' Hall at 10am is best for Lifestreams. Other suggestions offered are to combine the current Medbury service at 9am with Lifestreams; or to change morning service times to 9.00-10.00am/10.00-11.00am so to allow Lifestreams worship in St Barnabas' church at 10am. A new building was also proposed.

Final Reflection

It seems to me that each of these three lower scoring areas have each suffered in their own way from a change of staff and/or leadership transition, as well as a dislocation from the wider community, teaching resources, and physical space of St Barnabas'.

As we look to the future we need to tend to greater diversity of teaching, speakers and teaching styles and greater lay involvement in preaching/testimony times. As we relocate back to St Barnabas' the challenge to use our energies in positive Christ-centred mission has been put before us; this will require both imagination and continuity in leadership.

Regarding our place of worship; there is a strong sense of wisdom in Lifestreams returning to St Barnabas' for the determinable future. The long term location of Lifestreams still requires prayer, consultation and discernment under the leadership of a new Vicar.

I pray that the following months shall be a time filled with God's grace in a way that reconnects and unites. May we as God's people continue to give witness to Christ's resurrection in the way we worship and celebrate life together.

Revd. Andrew McDonald

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