

Act 1:4-9, Ephesians 4:1-6

Today we are thinking together about the future direction of Trinity Church Eindhoven. It is a chance for church members to describe what TCE is like and their hopes and dreams of what it will become. The shape of our aspirations will influence what kind of person the church will choose to appoint as the Pastor.

In Western Europe the popular culture has moved away from accepting Christian Truth as a given. During the whole of my lifetime the church in England and Western Europe has been shrinking, attendance at church has been falling. But the decline is not even. Some congregations continue to grow and thrive while others decline and close.

In other parts of the world the church is growing. Worldwide there are 2 billion Christians.

Estimated 70,000 new Christians each day.

1,000,000 new Christians each year in China

Worldwide the Christian Church is growing faster now than at any time in History.

The gospel of Jesus has not changed.
It is of ultimate significance to every person.
Our greatest need is to be right with God.

We have been made in God's image. Our vocation is to show what God is like as his image bearers in creation.

All over the world there are communities of Christians, congregations like TCE, who live in a worshipful relationship with the Lord our God. There aren't any perfect churches. Each unique congregation is different, a work in progress.

Ten days after Jesus' Ascension into heaven the Holy Spirit came upon those who had met to pray. Jews, from all over the Roman Empire who were gathered in Jerusalem for the Jewish festival of Pentecost heard the Good News from Peter.

Three thousand were baptised that day.

As many of those new believers returned home to their Jewish communities in the different cities of the Roman empire the message began to spread. Those who stayed in Jerusalem "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship.... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." [Acts 2:42-47]

GOLD - Worship is central to our life as a Community of faith. We express our love of God. We wonder at the beauty & glory of God seen in the self-giving love of our Lord Jesus.

In France I have seen fields of sunflowers. During the day Sunflowers turn their faces to the sun as it moves across the sky. Our focus is on Jesus. We acknowledge when we fall short of his will, or miss the target, and we thank him for his love & grace.

The style and content of the worship needs to be appropriate and real for the congregation. The Enxet tribal Indians Janny and I worked with in Paraguay had a graphic expression. "This scratches where it itches." When God's word met their need. If our practice of worship expresses our joy in God, our repentance, our commitment in a way that touches our hearts. The reality will be heartfelt and life changing.

In the Australian outback sheep farmers don't keep their sheep together by fencing them in. They do it by creating water holes. We need the refreshment of worship. If the refreshment is there the flock will gather. Jesus told his disciples to stay close, to **abide in Him**.

RED -The central emphasis of the of St Paul's letter to the Ephesians [4:1-6] is the importance of the practical out working of faith in personal behaviour and in the life of the community.

In the Community of Faith we bear one another's burdens. We weep with those who weep & rejoice with those who rejoice. We lament over those who do not know how to weep over their sin. We support one another in the changing circumstances of life through honest, loving relationships. We encourage and strengthen one another in doing good. Each believer contributes what the Lord our God has given them for the general good. The early church benefitted from the wisdom of a shared leadership.

The church is not an organisation for us to support it is a family to belong to. It is a family which offers its members support as we grow in our faith. This creates a community that people are attracted to. They will want to be part of that themselves and become followers of Jesus. Churches grow not by trying to grow but by doing their best to live out the good news.

The best explanation of the Gospel is a congregation of men & women who believe it and live it out day by day.

As members of Christ's body, The Christian Community, we find our vocation as St Paul says, **"Live a life worthy of the calling you have received."**

Against the general background of church decline TCE has continued to grow.

Jesus promised his disciples that they would Receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and to the ends of the earth [Acts 1:8]. That is still the experience of congregations who **Abide in Christ**.

Each local congregation is creating something beautiful like an artist painting in primary colours. As we live out our faith, not just in worship and fellowship but in our homes, schools and work places, we are painting a picture of what the Kingdom of God looks like in our local context.

BLUE - Why didn't the Apostles didn't immediately set off to evangelize the world. Jesus had said **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."** [Matthew 28 18-20]. It may have been partly because the Greek word translated as a command **"GO"** in most English Bibles is not quite as direct in Greek. It could be translated, "going" or "as you go".

In those early days the Holy Spirit was teaching and grounding the early church in the faith. It was not until serious persecution of the church broke out that the leaders spread out from Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit was at work teaching the church. It was not until 8 years later that Peter had been prepared to accept through a vision that it was acceptable to preach the Gospel to non-Jews [Acts 10:1-11:18]. Many of Peter's fellow church leaders in Jerusalem opposed him when Peter told them of his vision and visit to Cornelius the Roman Centurion. They were shocked that he had visited a gentile house, preached the gospel and baptised non-Jews.

Mission happens when a congregation engages with the surrounding world. We are a sign of hope in a world of isolation and loneliness.

The materialistic worldview and advertising set out to convince everyone that the more we consume the happier we will be. The Church is a sign of hope to a world that has believed the lie.

A Christian congregation demonstrates that people are not valued by the amount of money they have in the bank, the size of their house, the quality of their CV or the colour of their skin.

**Our life as a community of Faith is a witness
to another presence; to the reality of God.**

Each congregation is a living witness. In different congregations the overlaps between Worship, Community of Faith the Mission will be different. There will be different expressions.

The wind of the Holy Spirit teaches and empowers us in our life together

Our faith is at the centre of our life together. The process we are beginning this weekend is to discover where the overlaps are, where the priorities lie.

The Wardens and Church Council want to hear the voice of the congregation.
It is your chance to take part, to have your say.