

We Aspire to Be a Church for the City

Living like Exiles:

Read Jeremiah 29:4-7. There are so many great things about Portsmouth, the cool café culture, the history, the sea front, but it's so easy to take these things for granted. In Jeremiah God was speaking to a nation forcibly removed from their home as the result of an invasion, yet God told them to seek the prosperity of the (enemy) city they'd been taken to! God had led Israel into exile in Babylon. Despite it appearing to be a terrible thing (losing their homeland), God had planned for them to be there, for their good. We are also exiles in a foreign land, the Gospel has re-positioned us (see Gospel Centred Church Sep 27), we are now citizens of an everlasting heavenly Kingdom. Whether we enjoy Portsmouth, chose to be here or not, Jeremiah tells us unpack our bags, settle down, engage in the city, be seeking its welfare, and prosperity, and pray for it.

Q. Read Romans 8v28. Can you think of ways God is doing this for you in Portsmouth?

Q. Have there been ways in which you've avoided settling in Portsmouth?

Sent as Salt and Light:

The phrase 'in the world but not of it', doesn't exist in the Bible! It's a Christian slogan that has a subtle and dangerous emphasis that could lead to distancing yourself from the world. **Read John 17:13-18** the biblical emphasis should be 'we are not of the world but sent into it'. We have been sent here for a purpose. **Read Matthew 5 :13-16** We are salt and light. This is our identity, it's something we ARE as Christians, not something we need to try to be. The whole world is subject to decay (we age, buildings crumble, things get worse) and to darkness (Ephesians 6:12). As salt we preserve against decay (as Christians we are freed from the power of death and can free others). As light we illuminate darkness and point to the truth of who God is. As a Church we are like a city on a hill that cannot be hidden, the combined effect of salt and light in our workplaces and neighbourhoods will impact the city of Portsmouth.

Q. Discuss how 'in the world but not of it' is different to 'not of the world but sent into it'.

Q. In what situations do you come across darkness and decay in this city?

Q. How does having an identity of salt and light help you approach Christian witness?

Guided by Heavens Light:

We are not light like mini 'suns', in which we expect other people to tan themselves! We are lamps lit when we gave our lives to Christ. He is the true light. **Read John 1:4-5 & John 8:12.** As a Church we are guided by this light; we follow this light; and we exist to point others to this light. We exist for purpose in this city to continue the mission Christ sent us all to do: make disciples, to preach the gospel, to heal the sick, to bind up the broken hearted, and to declare freedom for those held captive by the darkness of this age.

We aspire to be a Church for the City:

- To see many 1,000s encounter the light of Christ, for the Gospel to spread like a wild-fire.
- To multiply meetings, church sites, and plant Churches to reach more people with Gospel.
- To see a change in the communities in which we worship (currently Portsea, Albert Road).
- To see many release from addictions of all sorts and shown the light of Christ.
- To have influence in every area of society as we are salt and light in our workplaces.
- To teach and equip Christians, seeing many released into fullness of their identity/call.
- To be a Church where many sick are healed, so that Christ's power would be known.

Q. What most excites you about the Church We Aspire to Be?

PRAY: Spend time in prayer for what you found most challenging, or has most convicted you.

PRAY: Pray for the darkness and decay you encounter in this city so that God's light would shine.