

Group Notes 18 September 2011

St Matthew's Day

Welcome - Ice Breaker

All the children are back at school now. Who was your favourite teacher? Who was your least favourite teacher?

Word – Matthew 9:9-13

Matthew, the tax-collector in this story, is thought to be the same Matthew who wrote Matthew's Gospel, describing his own conversion. The story reminds us what the Gospel is really all about. Jesus wants to change our lives through a deep encounter with His love. That change is expressed in repentance as Matthew leaves his money-centred life. It bears fruit in a transformed life as Matthew opens his heart and his home to others – all his friends come round for tea and Jesus meets with them too.

Question 1:

- **Have you come across a conversion story that has inspired you? Share it!**

On Sunday Colin took the opportunity of St Matthew's Day to share an overview of what has been going on in our life together as St Matthew's church. Here's a summary:

- God moving new people into place for what He wants to do – Liz and Ray Chamberlain, Liz Burley, Faithworks team...
- Wonderful things happening with families and children – Messy Church, Holiday Club, Blue Coat Clubs, new people from this sector showing up in our services...
- A great atmosphere in church these days: people don't want to leave, a buzz as we share together, and a sense of expectancy from God...
- Our ongoing strengths – a warm welcome, good relationships, grounded and prayerful older members, generous giving, home / cell groups...

Question 2:

- **What has most blessed you at St Matthew's over the last year?**

In addition to what has been happening, there are new opportunities for us ahead:

- An audit to clear away long standing issues concerning our communications and structures – an opportunity to set us free from things that hold us back from doing God's will and focus our energy on moving forward
- Young people - FaithWorks, Lee our new Youth Worker...
- Alpha, Back to Church Sunday, outreach opportunities
- We will be exploring discipleship, how to use our gifts and growing new leaders next year.

Question 3:

- **What would you most like to see happen at St Matthew's over the next 12 months?**

Let's go back to St Matthew's story. It reminds us of what Jesus most wants to do – change lives through meeting with Him. All the good things that God has been doing among us are fruitless if they

end up in a nice cosy club. How are we impacting on the people of Walsall? Are they getting to hear the good news of Jesus? Are they experiencing conversion and a changed life?

If they are to see this happen, it is the quality of our life in Christ that matters most. His friends saw a radical change in Matthew. He left his materialistic life and the notoriously corrupt ways of collaborating tax collectors under the oppressive Roman regime. People saw that he was now living for something new and different and wanted a piece of it. Will people see the same change in us as Matthew's friends saw in him? Will they want to come and meet the same Jesus who changed Matthew?

Question 4:

- **What is the single most important thing you can do to improve the quality of your spiritual life today?**

Worship ideas.

Hopefully after Question 2 you will have a list of things that have most blessed people at St Matthew's. Spend some time giving thanks for them.

Works/witness.

We have got three great opportunities to grow the church coming up!

- Back to Church Sunday 25 September. Could you pray as a group for the people you want to invite? Ask for the boldness to invite someone, the right person to approach, and a positive response from them.
- The Alpha Course starting Thursday 29 September – Are there people you could invite to come with you to Alpha? Pray for them!
- Messy Church 1 October. Is anyone in your group involved? Would they like prayer or any other form of support? Do you know a family with young children who might be interested?