

“theBarn in a Bottle”

The following is an encapsulation of who we are as a church, what we value and what we hope to reproduce.

1. High expectations of what God can do in and through the local church.
2. Creating a church environment that is alive everywhere.
3. Teaching that is authentic, passionate, bold, compelling, practical, applicable and challenging.
4. Individual services really go somewhere, take people on a journey.
5. Genuine desire to press into the move of the Holy Spirit, so the door is wide open for Him to be able to do what needs to be done.
6. Good leadership structure and practices, developing leaders, empowering leaders to lead, building teams and moving people into their sweet-spots.
7. High investment in kids’ ministry and youth ministry.
8. A culture of grace: welcome, acceptance and honour for all.
9. High commitment to quality and excellence in all areas.
10. Recognition that, although we work hard to grow our church and make it healthy, ultimately it must be about seeking and saving the lost.
11. Simple, clear, well-defined process: We meet with God, walk with God and serve God ... that’s what we do.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR POTENTIAL CHANGE AHEAD

The logo for 'theBarn' features the word 'theBarn' in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The 'the' is smaller and positioned to the left of 'Barn'. The text is set against a solid orange rectangular background.

It is wonderful that the Lord is continuing to cultivate life, growth and movement here at theBarn. Momentum is precious: we are immeasurably grateful and well-aware of our need to steward it carefully. We are continuing to grow quickly and on Sunday mornings, whilst there may still be some available seats in the auditorium, the space for our pre-school kids, primary-age kids and youth has reached capacity and the car park is also regularly full.

The accepted wisdom is that once a service exceeds 80% capacity, growth starts to slow down. We are definitely fast approaching and in some areas already exceeding the 80% mark.

Our Pastors and Trustees are confident that the Lord is challenging us to respond to the blessing of growth and momentum. It seems to us that the various options can be summarised as follows:

- a) PLANTING (A new church, from scratch, launched from a parent church)
- b) RELOCATION (Find a bigger building with greater capacity)
- c) BUILDING RENOVATION (Spend money on expanding our existing space)
- d) MULTI-SERVICE (Several services in one location, all of which are the same in flavour and content)
- e) MULTI-SITE (One church, multiple locations: Now we’re reproducing the same thing, with a central hub and regional locations)

One of the key factors to consider in our planning for the future is the availability of resources. We are just arriving at the point where our giving is able to financially support the facilities we currently enjoy and the staff team that we rely on. We mustn’t overlook the need to operate on a wise and balanced budget.

With all that in mind, our Pastors and Trustees do not feel that God is calling us to PLANT a new church (option a) because planting could leave the Barn financially stretched and under-resourced. There is definitely a time for planting – indeed we are a relatively recent church plant – but we do not feel that it would be the best way of leveraging the resources God has blessed us with. Why dilute when we can multiply?

RELOCATION (option b) is something we could consider, but frankly there just isn't a building in our neighbourhood big enough. In addition, it would be hugely expensive and the process could well take years, particularly if we were to build from scratch. And we want to be able to respond to what God is saying to us today.

BUILDING RENOVATION (option c) is a possibility, but investigations already made into temporary buildings and structural alterations suggest that a large injection of resources would be required. We must also remember that we do not own the building and that it is not currently for sale. The loss of car parking space and the other complications that alterations would bring could also make the site overloaded and difficult to operate.

The two remaining options are Multi-Service (option d) and Multi-Site (option e). MULTI-SERVICE would have the advantage of allowing us to continue to grow without greatly increasing costs or requiring too much in the way of additional resources. It would allow us to grow a larger congregation and create a surplus of resources that could be channelled into further Kingdom growth down the line.

MULTI-SITE would certainly be a bold step, and it is one that quite a few churches around the world have taken in recent times. It enables you to reproduce what you're successfully doing and maximise your resources without starting from scratch. Multi-Site would certainly be a challenge and we would be looking for clear guidance and open doors from the Lord. Could we have the Barn satellites at strategic locations around our area? The Pastors and Trustees certainly feel that God might call us down this path one day.

Whichever route we choose, and God is calling us to choose one sooner or later, there will be a cost. If we choose to have multiple services, some of your friends or Connect Group members might not come to the same service anymore. Your routine will have to change, and we all like the comfort of routine. We might be asking you to volunteer slightly more frequently because the workload has increased. At least initially the services would be quieter, and we've just spent ten years building the 'buzz.' We might feel as though we're 'rattling around' a bit. But, God is always asking us to create room for growth ... free seats for new Christians ... space for our kids and our guests ... and we need blue skies, rather than ceilings!

One important consideration is that we would still be doing the same thing in the same way, just doing more of it. The two services would be exactly the same in flavour and content. Both services will get the same worship set, same preach and same coffee! Our kids would of course still get Rachel; our teenagers would still get Jon.

Among the benefits, at least to begin with the fellowship time would be less crowded. There'd be more access to the pastors, leaders and ministry team. Parking would be easier (perhaps more complex between services, but I know our team love a challenge!)

The purpose of this survey is to gather perspectives and preferences to inform our discussions and decisions and supplement our outside research. Ultimately we are, of course, relying on the Lord to direct us. As Pastors and Trustees we will be praying and listening to discern what God is saying – we are so fortunate to have a wise, experienced and diverse leadership group – and we know that you will be praying too. Maybe we'll be stepping into something new and exciting soon?

In terms of the survey itself, it might be tricky to answer some of the questions! Do you answer wearing your parent hat? Your team volunteer hat? Your personal preference hat? We'll let you balance all of that!

So, thank you very much for participating: The gathering of thoughts and perspectives will be most helpful!