

Hello church family!

Guys, I wanted to take a few of your minutes to say thank you, to talk about the past few years and finally to look ahead to what's coming and ask you a couple of questions. So, here goes:

Looking back

Firstly, I wanted to thank you for being a part of our wonderful community. Over the years church has become an active hub of friendships, family and joy. But the most beautiful part of this is seeing Jesus at the centre of it all. I utterly love watching conversations happen across the generations that cover all life subjects but seem to so organically involve faith. This has been my dream since I first started here nearly ten years ago. So - thank you.

Over the last 10 years we've watched our church grow from a small aging congregation that had a desire to be involved in the local community but lacked the ability to do so due to many factors. I've watched this lovely group now become a bustling community that spans the age range, with families young and old, and reach over 120 people (if everyone all turned up at the same time). This still feels humbling to say the least. In this time, we've re-opened the baptism tank and seen over twenty people be baptised and countless others come to faith. Our coffee shop opening has seen us earn a respected place in our local community and is often the first place people come to talk about life's problems due to the friendships that have been made with us and the volunteers over coffee.

September

As of September, and moving forward, we will be seeing a few vital changes in how we do what we do, but hopefully not changing who we are.

We are excited to begin our 'Dual Services':

9am-10am: a reflective shorter service (this won't have the provision of children's work.)

10-11am: a joint refreshment break, allowing for those who attend the first service to meet and chat with those who attend the second.

11am-12:30pm: a higher energy service with children's work. This will also be the one that we stream.

Our desire isn't to build two congregations, or to create division, but instead to allow people to choose the service that works for them based on that particular week, as the sermon, teaching (and a lot of the time the chosen worship songs) will be the same for the two services. Many volunteers who give in the second service have already expressed the desire to come to the earlier and be spiritually fed before going and serving in the second. This whole set-up is designed to allow us to continue to grow whilst also making sure everyone still feels seen, known and loved.

On the first Sunday of the month, we are continuing our Family Table Service at 11am. On this Sunday there won't be an earlier service, as we want for us all to be able to join and worship together. As this is a family-based service there will not be children's work, but instead offering a service where families can worship together. We will also be utilising the

rest of the building providing extra seating and streaming the service into these areas, such as the coffee shop, lounge and even the back hall enabling us to meet as one, share communion and even food afterwards.

Oh and did I mention we're having more baptisms!?

As part of our Family Tables in October, December and February, we will be celebrating the life and faith of Lisa, Radhika and Courtney as they get baptised and share some of their story!

Table housegroups

Due to a few of our table leaders moving away or family responsibilities having changed, our current Table leaders and hosts can't continue, so this has led us to change things up a little. We are now in the midst of remodelling and training new leaders for a relaunch of these, likely in the new year, so please watch this space!

We are Citizens

We will be taking a momentary pause on our monthly discipleship course, due to us prioritising the new Alpha course that is starting next week. I apologise for this disruption, but we want to make sure that we aren't over stretching the team, and that we are focusing on where we believe God is calling us to grow.

Thank YOU

Finally (yes - I appreciate you getting down to this part of the letter, so don't worry, you're nearly there!) we want to finish by not just saying thank you for the past and present, but also looking ahead to our immediate future. Change isn't always easy, and I'm certain that there are going to be bumps along the way. Many of you who have been part of a table will for this next season feel their absence. The changes in service may feel different. The people you are used to sitting next to might not be in the service you attend. Your Sunday timings will be different. And so many other changes.

But I'd like to thank you for being willing to bear with us during all of these changes. For giving us (the church leadership) grace, for talking to us as we weather it together, and for sticking with and digging in to help be part of it all. And most importantly: for praying with us and for us.

We love you guys and are excited, but we're also not daft - we know it's not going to be smooth. But friction isn't always a negative... a spark requires friction.

So as we move into this new chapter we do it together, as a family.

Once again, thank you for being part of our amazing family at Four Oaks Baptist Church.

Yours in Him

Rev Phil

