

Overview of Pre-Conference Teaching Series

‘The Unchanging God and the Need for Change’: Aug to Sept 2025

Recap and Intro

We’re aware that life and rhythms can take our church family here, there and everywhere – and that catching up isn’t always easy either. Nevertheless, the recent teaching series over August and September laid out a number of key principles that are crucial for us all to hear and apply as we talk about change as a congregation. Consequently, this document seeks to give a reminder as an equipping resource for our conversations and future decision making, alongside the ideas, questions, etc that will be raised and shared across the conference.

The Unchanging God

It is crucial, as we talk about change, to note that we do so in a context where God is unchanging, specifically in three broad ways:

1. God’s Person is Unchanging

Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’”

God is the same and unchanging, such that He also conquered death (Rev. 1:18). He is our sure foundation amidst change.

2. God’s Purpose is Unchanging

Ephesians 1:4-5 ‘In love the Father predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ...’

God had a plan before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4) and He made it known through Jesus (Eph. 1:8-10): that through Jesus we were being reconciled, forgiven, made secure in the Father’s love and have a hope (Eph. 1:12) that can never be lost. God made this good news known first through Jesus and then through the Church (Eph. 1:13), and this continues now to this very day – God’s purpose has not changed: He desires a people of His own (Titus 2:14), which is only made possible through Jesus and is shared now as the Church makes this known in the power and love of the Holy Spirit.

3. God’s Promise is Unchanging

Hebrews 13:5 ‘God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”

Psalm 121:2 ‘My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.’

Matthew 16:18 ‘I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.’

God has made numerous promises to us, including that He will build His Church, and be with and for His people. Upon His unchanging trustworthiness we can rely and put our full trust in each and every promise being fulfilled, for they are all “Yes and Amen in Christ Jesus” (2 Cor. 1:20).

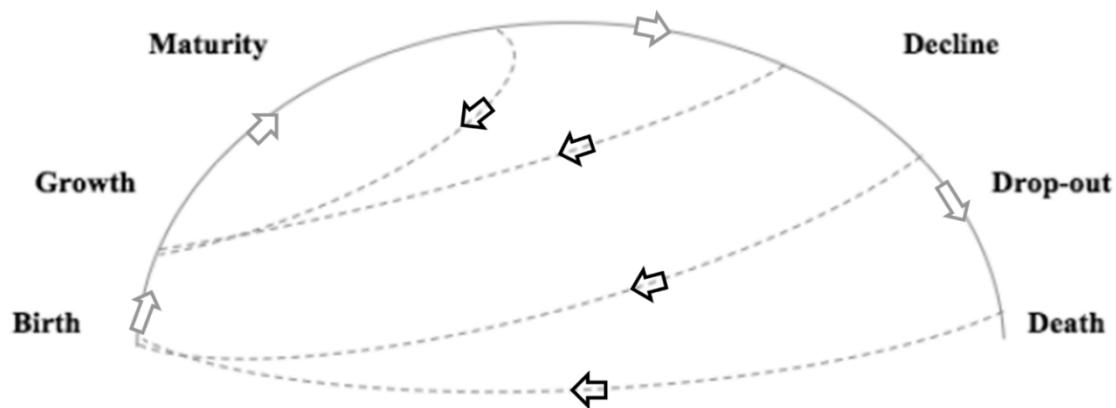
The above points, and related sermons, show that we can have great confidence, peace and hope even in times of great change.

The Need for Change

In the other half of the series, we reflected upon the need and way of change, without giving a step-by-step “cookie cutter” plan, nor a “one-size-fits-all” solution, nor some grand vision to “rally” around. Rather, holding to our core purpose (to invite, encourage and enable people to follow Jesus) we explored a number of biblical principles that lead to life and fruitfulness in the Kingdom.

To visualise the journey ahead, or the future journey if we choose not to change, the diagram over the page was shared and referred to each week:

Legacy Churches: Life-Cycle



We were also reminded of the following quote: "Your [church] is perfectly designed to yield the result you are getting." (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*)

So, if we wish to see different results, we must change, or we must accept decline and death (i.e. closure). Towards that end, we saw from Scripture:

Mark 8:27-37

- We must die (to self) or die out as this is a gospel principle, not only individually but collectively – life comes as we take up our cross.
- We are faced with the choice to fudge or follow the call of Jesus, recognising that halfway measures won't work.
- So, shall we live for self, or for Jesus – whose agenda are we pursuing?

Luke 10:1-9

- As Jesus called "others" beyond the Apostles to share the good news, we too are called to be ambassadors not only attendees – mission has to be fundamental to our individual and collective lives.
- The above can feel daunting, but God is after children not champions – we will feel vulnerable, but we must be trusting and even risk-taking in faith.
- One way we express that trust is by being prayerfully on mission – the Church has always known its most impact as it prays, for without prayer we may look the part but not change anything around us. So, are we fire without heat? Only if we don't pray!

John 15:1-8

In the final messages, we saw that fruitfulness (the fruit of the Holy Spirit [Galatians 5] and that of seeing people come to faith in Jesus [John 4]) comes by:

- Cutting Back – sometimes we need to prune the good and the bad, both in our individual lives but also in our collective life together. What will we stop doing to make space for better?
- Connection - Jesus said, 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.' (John 15:5) We will not be fruitful without a healthy connection to Jesus – are we connected and deepening that connection?
- Choice - Jesus finally said, 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit — fruit that will last...' (John 15:16) but we also have a choice: to respond, to receive, to remain in Him. Jesus won't force us. What will we choose?

Summary

We hope the above helps us to recall the teaching of this series and the many important principles that were shared to prepare us to enter into the Church Conference in an open and responsive way.