

Weekly Newsletter: 29 April 2025

Reflection: Preparing for Growth

By Joe Barnard

I spent a lot of my childhood going back and forth between two cities, New Orleans and Dallas. The difference between the city planning of each was obvious. New Orleans survived on its reputation with tourists. There was very little strategic initiative and things like road works were more of a matter of avoiding catastrophe than forward thinking. Dallas was the complete opposite. Cities in Texas always expect to grow. In Dallas, as soon as one new motorway was completed, the diggers would break ground to build the next one. There was an ever-present sense of urgency to make sure the city was prepared to service the new people who would soon be building houses.

I hope as a church that we are proactive in terms of both expecting growth and preparing for it. A lot of people right now are talking about the rise of religious interest in the UK. This trend combined with our missional activities means that we have every reason to be optimistic that more discipleship and more baptisms are in the future of Holyrood. And this means that now is the time to be preparing for growth. A larger vine requires a stronger trellis; following this logic, we need to be making small changes now to make sure that we are able to support an expanding church family.

It is with an eye to growth that the session is looking to make a few changes in the months to come. Here are three things to be aware of.

1 – Making Better Use of the Foyer

Every retail shop understands the critical importance of the entry into its premises. If you go into JD Sports, Tesco, or a local bank branch (assuming you can find one), the first several metres of the space will be carefully arranged. Shops realise that customers come and go quickly from a building. Therefore, they use space strategically to make sure vital information is communicate to customers as soon as they walk in.

At Holyrood, we've often talked about the importance of "moving people to the centre". It's one thing to repeatedly visit a church; it's something else to feel like you know how to move from being an outsider to being an insider. This is what we mean by helping people move to the centre. There is a lot of information that longstanding members take for granted that new people struggle to learn. What are home groups? What is the prayer meeting? Who are the elders? What children's programming exists? A person can attend a church for a surprising length of time before finding out the basic details of our congregational life.

In view of this problem, we are hoping to make some cosmetic changes to the foyer in order to help communicate essential information to visitors at Holyrood. The wonderful thing about the foyer is that everyone passes through it twice when they come to our building. Therefore, if we use the space strategically, it should mean that key information is literally within hands reach as people enter and exit. God willing, this will increase the impact of our evangelism and discipleship – as well as the quality of our fellowship.

2 – Use of “Holyrood Church”

I’m conflicted about the word “evangelical”. On the one hand, I love it. It reminds me of the authority of the Bible, the centrality of the cross, and the need for personal, active faith. When I think of evangelicalism, I think of George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, JC Ryle, Billy Graham, and John Stott. I consider these to be some of my greatest heroes.

On the other, I’m aware that “evangelical” has very different connotations for people outside of the evangelical fold. As I heard on a podcast recently, in the 1980s being “evangelical” meant liking Billy Graham. In the 2020s, being “evangelical” means liking Donald Trump. And sadly, this is true for a lot of people. For those living around Montgomery St., “evangelical” is more of a political label than a religious one. When they hear the word, they don’t think of the British evangelical leaders of the 18th and 19th centuries. They think of the rollercoaster of US politics.

Now churches should always remove unnecessary obstacles to gospel ministry where possible. In light of this, we are going to begin to use “Holyrood Church” on a lot of our church communication (i.e. signage, flyers, logos). Officially, our name will still be Holyrood Evangelical Church. However, we will increasingly refer to ourselves as “Holyrood Church”.

3 – Expanding the Children and Youth Work

One good question to ask as we look to increase our gospel impact is, what is God doing already? Always, God is *already* at work. He never slumbers nor sleeps. This means that church strategy is less about drafting a vision than discerning prayerfully how we can be a part of what the Spirit is already stirring.

Now, when I look at our placement in Edinburgh several things stand out to me. One is that we are beside a playpark. Families gather daily across the street from our building. Another is that we have two primary schools less than a half of a mile from us. Another is that more children are coming to our services and we have a growing Baby and Toddler group.

It’s not hard to connect these dots. If we’re trying to figure out discipleship opportunities around us, we need to be thinking more about children’s ministry. I’m pretty confident if someone kicked a football each week at the same time in the park, it wouldn’t take long for a thriving kid’s club to develop.

In view of this, we hope to invest more in our children and youth work in the near future. This will involve discipling more intentionally the children and youth already a part of the church as well as doing more outreach to children and youth around Easter Road. Please pray for the session as we think about how to fulfil Jesus’ words, “Let the children come unto me.”

Jonah Laas

We rejoice with Jacques and Kadi at the safe arrival of their son, Jonah, on Friday 25 April. Mum and baby are doing well and pray for them as they adjust to being a family of three!

Sam Allen

Sam has been our Ministry Apprentice since August last year and his final Sunday in the role will be on 11 May.

Give thanks for all the ways that Sam has served and blessed us as a church family. He will still be around in Holyrood for the next couple of month. Pray for wisdom for him as he seeks God's leading about the future.

SOLAS Event – Is There Any Hope for the Future?

We're looking forward to having Steve Osmond come and speak in Holyrood on **Friday 9 May** from 7.30-9pm. He'll look at the topic '**Is There Any Hope for the Future?**' This is a great event to invite friends to and there are flyers available in the church. Please take some and spread the word!

If you've not heard of [Solas](#) (the Gaelic word for "light") before, they are a Christian charity based in Scotland but working across the whole of the UK. The Solas vision is to share the good news of Jesus *persuasively* and equip Christians for evangelism *practically*.



Prayer Meetings

This Wednesday we are looking forward to Melissa Power and Rebekah Collins from [HOPE Pregnancy](#) coming along to speak to us about their work. The prayer meeting will start as usual at 7pm (with refreshments from 6.45pm) and there will be a separate online meeting.

The following Wednesday (7 May) we will be having a meal together at 6pm (come from 5.45pm) and the prayer meeting will start at 7pm. We're looking forward to Lorna Ferguson sharing with us about the work in Japan and having some Japanese food! Please come along if you can.

This will be our last meal together before the summer break and keep an eye on the newsletter for details of when our monthly meals will resume.

This Sunday

Joe is attending a conference in the US from Saturday 2 May until Thursday 8 May. We're very thankful to Jon Gemmell for taking our services this Sunday and please contact one of the elders with any pastoral matters while Joe is away.

OMF Conference - Japan: across the street and across the world

It was great to hear from Lorna Ferguson and Jude Tindale at the OMF Conference on Saturday. The sessions were recorded, please contact Liz@holyroodevangelical.org if you would like the link to watch them.

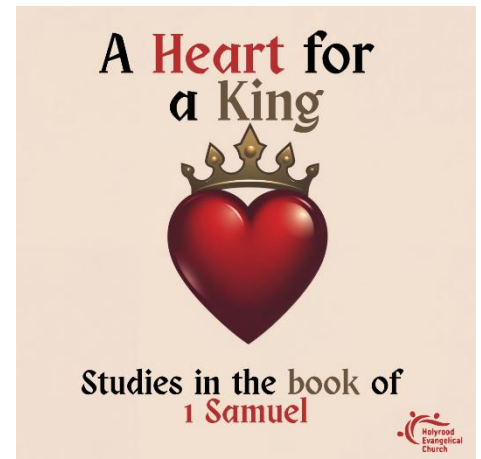


1 Samuel - A Heart for a King

1 Samuel is an absolute blockbuster!

Get ready for epic battles, laugh-out-loud encounters, soul-stirring sermons, unforgettable heroes and villains, a sinister snake king, fearless armour bearers, a sword-wielding prophet, and—of course—a humongous giant. This is the stuff of legends, and yet here it is, for real, and all in 1 Samuel.

While packed with some of the Bible's most iconic stories, 1 Samuel is far more than just a collection of famous moments. It's a book often overlooked as a whole, reduced to simplistic character studies like "be less like Saul, be more like David," or "face the giants in your life." But this incredible book was given to us by God for something much deeper—something richer and more powerful.



For the next three Sunday evenings, we'll be continuing in our extraordinary journey through 1 Samuel. This Sunday we'll be studying chapter 8 together.

Don't miss this exciting journey as we dive into **1 Samuel: A Heart for a King**. It would be such a joy to have you join us as we explore this remarkable book and its timeless message.

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm (with refreshments from 6.45pm)
- Thursday:
 - Women's Bible Study at 10.30-11.30am
 - Session Meeting at 7pm
- Sunday:
 - Morning service at 10.30am – Jon Gemmell preaching (live streamed)
 - Evening service at 6pm – Jon Gemmell preaching (live streamed)
- Monday: Baby and Toddlers from 10-11.30am



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