

Stanmore Chapel centenary plan

Stanmore Chapel was founded in 1932. So in 2032 we will be celebrating our 100th birthday! That occasion gives us an opportunity to reflect on where we have come from and also where we would like to be and the direction we would like to be heading in at that stage.

The Chapel's Centenary Vision

**A thoroughly diverse church,
standing for timeless truth,
in a 21st century building.**

A thoroughly diverse church

Stanmore Chapel is situated in a remarkably diverse part of the world. According to the 2021 Census the London Borough of Harrow is the fifth most ethnically diverse local authority in the country and *the most* religiously diverse.

The people of God in the Kingdom of Jesus are a diverse people from *'every tribe, tongue and nation'* (Revelation 7:9). The calling of Jesus to the disciples was to *'go and make disciples of all nations'* (Matthew 28:19). The dividing of the world into people's and languages at Babel in Genesis 11 was not a good thing but a consequence of human sin and selfishness. But Jesus has pressed backspace on Babel!

And so at the Chapel, given the diversity all around us, we have a truly wonderful opportunity to live out our calling as Christians and also embody a snapshot of what the Kingdom looks like as we seek to live out the gospel with one another and reach out with the gospel to those around us.

Whilst we understand why many churches represent a particular nationality or ethnic or cultural background, at the Chapel we want to strive to be a church which is thoroughly diverse in ethnicity, culture, social status, religious background, age and even, so far as is it is possible, language. We want to be an intergenerational, international, missional church.

We want this to be true of us as a church and we want it to be true of those we serve as a church by opening the doors to, and moving out into, the local community. Allowing people, whoever they are, the chance to have the love of Christ shown to them and shared with them.

We don't want tokenism. Instead we want genuine integration and a church culture which is welcoming, understanding, patient and flexible. We want to provide the space for friendships and family love to flourish as people get to know one another and journey side by side as followers of Christ.

Whilst we acknowledge that every church must have a 'culture' and 'way of doing things', we want to see diversity reflected in our leadership, in our public worship, in our style and in our church family life from top to bottom. We want diversity to be a key part of the DNA of the church.

By 2032 we will;

- ❖ Reflect the diversity of Stanmore in our church family and various other groups (Friday Club, Youth Club, etc).
- ❖ Have a leadership and staff team which reflects the diversity of the church.
- ❖ Enable people to use their gifts, making the most of the diverse way in which God has made us.
- ❖ Utilise a variety of musical, prayer and learning styles to allow us to grow together as a church family.
- ❖ Offer a variety of ministries and outreaches enabling us to connect with and serve a wide range of people in the local area.
- ❖ Be seeking to offer practical ways for people from different linguistic backgrounds to easily integrate into the church.

Standing for timeless truth

For the entirety of its existence the Chapel has stood for the truth of the gospel as delivered to us by God through his word, the Bible. In this way we are aligned with others standing for the historic Christian message. Whilst independent for many years the Chapel has been part of the Fellowship of Independent Churches (FIEC) and ascribes to the FIEC's basis of faith and doctrinal distinctives.

The truth of the Biblical gospel - the good news of God's love shown to us in Jesus Christ our Lord and saviour – is not something on which we are flexible. Whilst many aspects of church life can and must change over time, the truths on which we stand are something on which we cannot and must not compromise.

Indeed these truths are the most precious thing we have. They are the only source of true unity, the only way for a diverse people to be brought to real oneness. And they are the only way to life, hope, peace and real joy for Stanmore and the wider area.

If we are to genuinely love and serve Stanmore we will only do so by holding out to them the thing that we uniquely possess – the good news of Jesus.

And so as we look to our centenary and beyond we do so assured and determined to continue to proclaim this good news and to seek to live it out together. This means that the teaching of the Bible will remain at the cornerstone of our gatherings, our ministries, our church family life. And the sharing of this message will remain the ultimate end of how we seek to serve Stanmore.

By 2032 we will...

- ❖ Continue to make Bible preaching, teaching and study the core of our church life.
- ❖ Continue to seek ways to show and share the love of Christ with those around.
- ❖ Continue to stand for Biblical truth even when that is hard in the culture.

- ❖ Continue to equip and support one another to stand for Christ in the places that he has put us.
- ❖ Be flexible in finding creative ways to present the gospel to people from diverse backgrounds; making the most of the diversity of the church family in doing so.
- ❖ Be prepared to go to those who will not come to us.

In a 21st century building

The Chapel is in an excellent geographic location. It is close to the centre of Stanmore, easily accessible by both road and public transport and we are highly visible. We are also in a densely populated area; more than 100,000 people live in Stanmore and the adjacent wards.

The Chapel buildings have been a tremendous blessing over the past century. Built by the members of the church when Stanmore was a village surrounded by fields, they have allowed for a place of faithful witness for many years. And they continue to be a great blessing for us now!

However the buildings have a number of issues in terms of maintenance and size which over the coming years has the potential to become harder in terms of safe upkeep and also restrictive in terms of growth. The Chapel can accommodate around 110 people which is relatively small and we are currently often close to that capacity.

Looking ahead into Stanmore Chapel's second century we would like to explore the possibility of building a new Chapel building on our current site.

Potentially this would allow us to reconfigure the site to make most use of the land. Although a lot of work needs to be done in terms of design and planning we would like to explore the feasibility of building a three-storey building allowing one floor to be used as a main meeting space with a significantly larger capacity, and then using the upper floors for other meeting rooms, Sunday School and creche spaces and some office rooms. Ideally we would like any new building to work in such a way as to make it possible to continue to accommodate Honey Pots Pre-School.

Whilst this kind of project is obviously a very significant undertaking practically and financially we believe that God is more than able and that this kind of project could form a crucial part of setting the Chapel up to serve the gospel and serve Stanmore for the next 100 years.

The group of men and women who built the current building with their own bare hands in the 1930s did so because they had faith that God would bless their endeavours if they were in line with his will. We have the opportunity likewise to similarly step out in faith in our day.

By 2032 we will...

- ❖ Be meeting in a new, modern, functional, flexible building allowing us to gather comfortably as God's people week-by-week
- ❖ Be seeking to make use of the building to serve and connect with the local community
- ❖ Have room for growth