

Dear members and friends of SEC

Sometimes I am asked, 'what is your vision for the church?' I confess that I find this question rather difficult to answer. What exactly is a 'vision', anyway? The oft-quoted text from Proverbs 29:18, 'Where there is no vision, the people perish', is speaking about divine revelation, not hopes or plans. Why should the vision of any individual – the pastor or anyone else – be regarded as authoritative? More significantly, a church is not a business that can set certain 'targets for growth' over the next twelve months, review them at the end of the year and then hold various parties accountable. To think in these terms, forgetting that the Lord alone gives growth, is sheer arrogance.

On the other hand, we need to beware of the tendency to simply 'drift along' and lose our focus. Why do we come together on the Lord's Day, and on Wednesday evenings? Is it possible that some of us are becoming mechanical? The beginning of a new year is an ideal opportunity to remember who we are and what our purpose is as a church. And it does seem that there are certain summary statements in Scripture that crystallise the church's great calling. One such text is **Romans 15:5-6: 'May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'** So on this basis, here are some – just some - specific aspirations for 2012. Let us pray for:

1. The Spirit of God to be present in all our gatherings, convicting of sin, granting repentance, and resulting in holy lives.
2. A high view of the public worship of God, and regular attendance on all the means of grace.
3. A spirit of united and fervent prayer that God would awaken us.
4. The faithful and powerful preaching, and the attentive and obedient hearing, of the glorious gospel.
5. Righteousness to be upheld in all our private and public lives.
6. Love for one another that is based upon our shared knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
7. Unity as God's people, that Satan may not create divisions by any means.
8. Men, women and children to come into contact with us, and to hear the truth.
9. The salvation of our children and grandchildren, some of whom are far away from God.
10. Those who are burdened through ill-health or difficult circumstances, that God would give them sufficient grace.

Your brother in Christ

Paul