

Thoughts as we start praying about the pub next door (from 25 June 2025):

Tim

- A sense that having the Hope and Anchor would really allow us to make our 'presence' felt in the town.
- A sense that Kings Place represents a smallish 'gate' for people to come 'in' to us and also for us to go 'out' to the town - but with the Hope and Anchor, we would have a much wider 'gate' for people to come in and for us to go out from.
- Important that we stay as centrally located as possible and be a community resource in the town.
- Important that we get as many people from the church family engaged as possible - and we have grace and wisdom to stay united whatever we decide to do!

John's compilation of thoughts from week of prayer

- Do not make any assumptions.
- The most important aspect is the journey or process to discern God's will and His vision for the church.
- The Hope & Anchor has been perceived as being a community resource by people in the town
- The journey should involve others outside of the church with whom we will form connections, including other churches in Wokingham.
- This process is not about the building, but about preparing the congregation
- The journey should result in a stronger praying church.
- People's hearts are the treasure and the building an aid to finding that treasure.
- The parable of the house on the rock; make sure that what we do is based on the firm foundation of Jesus' guidance. The house built on sand didn't fall down immediately, it fell down when the environment changed and strong forces came against it.

June

I was praying and reading last week and was drawn to Caleb's words when Israel reached the border of the Promised land, in Numbers 13.30:

"We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

Reading the chapter, some similarities with what we are currently doing struck me. Moses had sent the leaders in to see what the land was like. They reported back that the land was very fruitful, that it 'flowed with milk and honey'. But they were afraid of the giants who lived there. Moses told them not to be afraid because God had already removed the giants' protection and Israel would overcome them. But the leaders didn't listen, and the people chose not to go in because of fear. God's decision was that none of them should enter the land except those who had faith, - Caleb & Joshua.

Tara

1. This is a journey of faith. As with the May Fayre when we stepped out, we are being encouraged to wholeheartedly trust God and there may be times when it seems to defy logic / worldly wisdom. Its not just a process of acquiring a building and expanding space, its also a heart process / about expanding our hearts.
2. I sense God is saying that the buying of the Hope and Anchor is more about the community than the Church. Yes, we will benefit and grow but may not get as much physical space for main meetings as we would like. The space is more about reaching out to and blessing the community. Not sure what that looks like exactly.
3. I was searching for the verse that says: "This is the way, walk in it." and was reading Isaiah 30 the other day. I was struck by the picture of Israel looking back to Egypt and all it had to offer, instead of moving forward and trusting God. The words that hit me were: "Donkeys weighed down with riches and camels loaded with treasure - all to pay for Egypt's protection." (v6 NLT) Again, I felt that God was encouraging us to not look back but to completely put our trust in Him and that in doing that through this process, we would have a story to share as a church - a story that is our own and not someone else's. v. 18 "You will see you teacher with your own eyes. Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say. "This is the way you should go. "
4. I was struck by the idea that if we buy the pub, there will be interest in the story - A church buying a town centre pub! People will talk about it and it may be on social media. This is likely to be both positive and negative. I felt God asking: Are we comfortable with the focus being on us? He is calling us out and wants us to be more present. I was reminded of Mt 5 v 14-16 Let your light shine and particularly the words: "A city on a hill cannot be hidden." It made me think about the fact that we are at the top of a hill and so is the pub.

Then I re-read Isaiah 30 (for some reason!) and this time, it was verse 16-17 that jumped out. I felt God remind me that the heart process / wholehearted trust/ was just as important as the building and that if we just went ahead with the building without allowing Him to work in our hearts, drawing us closer, letting His light shine then ..."You will be left like a lonely flagpole on a hill or a tattered banner on a distant mountain top. "

5. In one of our prayer times I also kept having the words: "Location, location, location." A sense that God wants us to be a town centre church. It's not just about the building; it's about the location; having a presence.

John's compilation of thoughts on Sun 29th June (CF mainly)

1. Probably a town centre church in Wokingham
2. Possibly serving addicts as well as others.
3. Importance of garden in Hope & Anchor and the move towards the Hope & Anchor not just being to increase the worship area, but to provide other community services. (Nigel)

Tues evening 1st July

Kate Kahle

- PS121- The Lord watches over you. God is bigger than any one decision and even if we are out of step with him he will continue to be with us. Sensed this assurance of God's protection for the decision-makers involved in whether the pub should be purchased or not.
- Saw the church preparing a hospitality event for people – people were preparing table place settings and putting flowers in vases to make the space beautiful. People were afraid that no one would turn up; but there was a sense of assurance from God that regardless of the location people will come and we are to prepare generous and beautiful hospitality knowing people will come.

Words in context of question :

1. Does God want us to buy the Hope and Anchor pub or not (including its purpose for the church, practical resources, long term vision for the church, anything God wants to say about other places)?

- “Proximity not longevity”
Not sure exactly what it means, but the words I get are usually simple and therefore discernment is that the Pub offers benefits in purposes for proximity but not benefits in purpose for longevity.
- Reminded of Jesus pausing at the well and asking the Samaritan woman for a drink even though she was a social outcast. The bible shows that Jesus was (and is) highly interested in people whom popular society often considers to be the last, least, and lost. Prompted that these are people we as a church should be showing up with like Jesus has modelled.
- God prompted Samuel to ask Jesse: Do you have any more sons? Looking at the appearance and through the world's eyes the oldest son looked like the most appropriate to anoint as the future King. But God wanted David, who was the youngest and not the obvious choice to be the future King, because God knew the bigger plans and purposes. He looked at things differently. Reminder that we need to see things through God's eyes.
- Some of the accounts in the bible of multiplication and abundance are when Jesus told the disciples to cast their nets to the other side of the boat and the feeding of the 5,000. In these accounts the disciples had to listen to what Jesus said, obey what Jesus said even when what he was asking them to do didn't match up to their experience or logic, and give what they had generously (the little boy giving his lunch).

Words in context of asking question specifically around what the purpose of the Hope and Anchor would be for the church:

I saw a picture of a paper bag of chips and a saltshaker. If you shake the salt onto one chip or just a small part of the chips, then the chips become disgusting and unpalatable. But, if you shake the salt over all the chips they taste delicious. Reminder, if we only focus our living for Jesus (sharing about Jesus, serving, using our gifts etc) inside the church only it becomes unpalatable. We are called to shake the salt in every part of our lives; jobs, schools, relationships, families,

hobbies, community etc, and do these things outside of the church building.
Related to being salt and light in Wokingham / community outside of the church building.

Words in context of question:

Is there anything God wants to say about the Well?

- At The Well there are some individuals who are closer to making a commitment to Jesus. As you work there, ask God to open the eyes of your spirit to identify who these people are (they have a softness and openness about them) so you can invest into talking and relationship with them specifically.
- At The Well there are also some key people who maybe have more influence and if they became Christians they would create a domino effect of more and more people becoming Christians too. Ask God to open the eyes of spirit to identify who these people are. However, be mindful, these people have a lot of 'noise' around them and the approach will require more spiritual discernment, power, and effort to bring them to relationship with Jesus and create the domino effect.
- Saw a picture of Wendy P. Wendy was wearing a dark cloak with hood up. She was holding a lantern with a light in it and holding a shepherd's crook. It was wintertime; dark, cold, raining and windy, and she was looking outside (using her light and staff) for people who were lost outside to bring them with her. Sensed that God has given this purpose and passion to Wendy as part of her original design purpose for how she has been made. It is this part of Wendy that keeps her motivated and equipped to keep going out and do this work.

John. Saw a length of string which was used to sew Kings Place to the Hope & Anchor along the boundary between them. Felt it was right to do all we were doing at present and investigating all the possible ways we could benefit from the two buildings being joined. Even if in the future it was not God's mind to join us permanently, it would be easy for Him then to cut the string along the join.

John's compilation of words from Thurs 3rd July

- Jesus inviting us into His garden and on being planted, growing in the good soil. (Spike)

Patrick suggested that those present express their visions for the Hope & Anchor if we bought it. Below are the responses:

- A beacon which stands for God's presence, his love, servanthood etc. Also, a place of healing where broken people can be restored (Patrick)
- A place of community where friendships grow and people feel comfortable (Tara)
- A place of joy with children and people of very different circumstances sharing life together (Nigel)
- A place where people find hope and restoration
- Offer community related activities: e.g. Teaching English / conversation; games evenings. (June)

Tim (8th July)

1. Are we ready in our church lifestyle for the step up that this building would involve - new responsibilities?
2. We are a people of power - power as seen in 2 Chronicles 32 v7-8 Hezekiah
3. We have a heart for the needy - and we see people coming in at the Well. We also need to be a presence and have a heart for the self-sufficient / un-needy / hard of hearing - people in Wokingham. The harvest is ready
4. We have assets (financial!) both as a church and individually - there's a sense that these need investing in God's kingdom and in people (youth?). What has he put in our hands to use for him? Let's make the assets work for us and assign them to something that will grow and not just sit in a bank account (parable of the talents!)
5. The prayer we're taking part in is helping in shaping our vision for who we are as a church - we are not a building, that is just a resource to use and a facilitator to what we do - it's not the end game.
6. The treasure we are called to work with is the people of our community
7. We are to build on rock not sand - are there any spiritual obstacles we need to be aware of?
8. Are we seeing the opportunity - which one is right, pub or elsewhere? Caleb and one other of the 12 saw the promised land opportunity
9. Can we speak with other churches who have done similar projects with pubs or cafes (eg David's brother's church in Norwich) to get ideas
10. There are a number of references in Isaiah (eg ch40) where he warns against idols and especially ones that can easily fall over - don't want a building to become an idol or the focus of who we are.

Tim 9th July

- What fruit is God wanting us to produce with the resources we have been given?
- A picture inspired by visiting Exeter Cathedral recently - why was it built? Would have been very costly and took many years to build. It would have involved the whole community and needed skilled masons and was the town centre, the focal point. It would have been the focus of community life - giving the town a sense of awe and worship. It would have been far bigger than any other building in town. Whilst we're not called to build a cathedral - there are some of those aspects listed that will be involved for us as we grow Kings Church
- Isaiah 26 v7 . God is making smooth paths for us
- Harvest is ready - a sense that we're called to reach those in Wokingham with wealth, status and privilege, and who perhaps think they have no need of God
- A thousand generations bowing down before him - we are challenged to invest in the future of our church and the children and grandchildren who come after. (Isaiah 59 v21). 'Words that the spirit gives will be on your children's lips for ever - I the Lord have spoken'

Evening Prayer Meeting Tuesday 8th July.

Abby:

"I want to share what i feel the Lord is saying, its a bit of a journey so i dont know where it will go, but I need to share it as He led me. As everyone was praying, I was reminded of a song, its "In over my head" from Bethel and it was the line '...further and further, my heart moves away from the shore. Whatever it looks like, whatever may come I am Yours'. I really feel the common theme is stepping out onto the waters, as God is wanting to draw us out deeper and not focus on the waves, or the dark waters but keep focused on Him. Another song then came to me, "Preference" and the line that stood out to me was "what if it doesn't look like how I thought it would?, what if You come in ways I never thought You could? Offend my mind, reveal my heart, I won't worship my preference anymore" - I feel like God is saying, yes He is the same yesterday, today and forever but He is also doing a new thing and what if it's nothing like we've experienced before? What if it isn't what we're used to? To step out anyway. Trusting Him in the unknown.

I felt led to research the history of the pub next door and googled the history of the Hope & Anchor in Wokingham, and was blown away seeing that in the 17th Century, it was originally a coaching inn, built from timber beams from an old, deconstructed ship. that's what my first Google search led me to. And no.17 in Hebrew is connected to "Complete Victory" so I got excited. I then felt led to dig a bit further, so I typed in, 'What ship was used to build Hope and Anchor in Wokingham' and it popped up with this: - 'The Hope and Anchor Pub is not named after a specific ship.. it's a common name derived from Hebrews 6:19, which uses 'hope' and 'anchor' as metaphors for faith and steadfastness...' (Christen said this gives him chills because of what God has spoken to him, and how he kept coming back to this particular verse - which got me even more excited because God's word is established in the mouth of two or three witnesses!) I continued reading after this '...It's not tied to any particular vessel or maritime disaster. While some Hope and Anchor pubs are located near coastlines and have maritime related histories, the Wokingham location is not one of them. The pub's name, like many others, is a symbolic representation of hope and steadfastness, drawing from religious and philosophical concepts, rather than a specific ship'.

The sense that the pub here in Wokingham is set apart.

June:

The Hope & Anchor pub is well known in the town, meaning that there is a body of people who are familiar with it that have never been to Kings. If we buy the pub our connection with it will be obvious, and because of their previous experience this new group may well be drawn to find out about us and attend.

Tara:

Saw people trying to lift heavy marble pillars; they grew stronger as they lifted them into place, giving glory to God. Saw that other churches might be doing the same thing.

John:

Saw a seed being planted and resulting in slow, strong foundational growth in the picture of a strong tree, especially its trunk. Representing strong foundational growth before significant growth in size.

You think you are building a bigger church building but you are actually building a people of trust.

Spike

1. **Go.** Praying with P&P team I had a strong feeling of God standing me at the alleyway door, facing town and saying GO. Asking him what this means, I feel that any decision re Hope & Anchor has to part of reaching out to the town (fulfilling the Great commission)
2. **Far side of Hope & Anchor.** As we visited the Hope & Anchor, I kept asking God to show me if this building was God's Plan for us. I had a sense of peace in the half of the building next to Kings (planning permission for house). However, 3 times I had a negative sense in the other half of the building (planning permission smaller pub). In the back rooms I had an eerie sense, walking up the stairs I asked God to confirm it and saw a picture of Halloween image/devil and the third time, downstairs in the snug, I had a tightening of breathe as I asked God to confirm what I had already felt. It may be God is showing evil presence to be prayed through, but the question asked was "show me if this is God's Plan for Kings". I think *this needs to be confirmed and held lightly*
3. **Acts 16** *And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.* I felt God encourage me that he would close doors and make clear a way. Over time I have felt an importance on the sense of being invited. I feel that there may be some form of invitation to buy the pub as part of God's confirmation
4. **The key** – I had a picture of God handing me the key to the front door of the pub and asking me (Spike) "so what would you do with it". I think this is more than asking for ideas but firming up a sense of confirmation of what he wants.

Confirmations of other words

1. Assumptions – I felt a sense of confirmation when June shared not to make assumptions. I think there is more of this word to be revealed
2. Investment . I also felt a sense of God's confirmation when Tim shared about asking God how to invest the money Kings has. I feel it goes deeper in that not only the purchase, but the ongoing use of Hope & Anchor should be seen to be a

wise investment for God's Kingdom, and that this is a yardstick to measure we are following God.

Caroline

As I've thought through some of the alternatives eg re-work Kings Place and add more upstairs space; look at a warehouse up for sale in Molly Millars Lane etc it seems as if the easiest solution is if next door will work. I particularly think of the Well. Work on Kings Place especially if it involved any demolition would stop the Well from happening and Kings Kiddies would have to hire somewhere for a while. Where we are at the moment is in a good spot (apart from parking issues) Much more central than somewhere like Molly Millars Lane.

It's quite probable that all the things I'm going to say have already been thought of.

I looked at an article when the pub was seeking permission to change half its usage. It gives an interesting insight into the historical part which has made it Grade II listed.

The right-hand side of the Hope and Anchor still retains its 15th century Wealden hall house – a type of vernacular medieval timber-framed hall house traditional in the southeast of England

This is what would restrict what we can do. However, Historic England give grants to help develop and conserve such a building.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/grants/our-grant-schemes/#:~:text=Sign%20in-Our%20Grant%20Schemes,the%20war%20memorials%20grant%20scheme.>

I looked at the Property Conservation Company website that details very clearly what the restrictions are and who say:-

Always check with your local conservation officer or a heritage expert if you are unsure, as even minor changes might require approval depending on the specifics of your property.

<https://www.propertyconservationco.co.uk/blog/what-alterations-can-i-make-to-a-grade-ii-listed-building/>

Consulting with the local conservation officer is probably something we should do even before putting in an offer.

And then I felt that because we want to be sure this is God's heart for us, to pray for favour from both the sellers and the council eg price, but also making a way for their car park to be used free of charge by us.

Wendy & Nigel

Nigel & I have been praying and considering the future in the light of certain circumstances.

- 1) Over the years reference has been made consistently about the fact that The Hope & Anchor is next door, that it is so named and also how convenient it

would be to purchase it and extend the scope & reach of the mission of Kings Church.

- 2) As a Church we had already been verbalizing the need to consider how we cope with growing numbers.

The Church have prayed, those with skill in seeing the possibilities and pitfalls have made their thoughts known.

Now that The Hope & Anchor is advertised for sale, it seems to us the right way forward to try the door and see if it opens for us. Again our prayers have been that if it's not right then we want God to swing that door shut, but in the light of 1 & 2 we feel it would be wrong not to try that door.

Our experience of The Well is that we had plans of what we thought would happen each week, we stepped out with those thoughts in our head and quickly discovered that we had to then re-think in the light of all that opened up. We continued to embrace each new thing, seeing it as God's plans and purposes, welcoming the twists and turns which we had no way of seeing at the beginning. (some of which would have been too formidable to have considered at the beginning)!

We believe it will be like this for Kings. We can have thoughts and ideas for use of The Hope & Anchor, some building work in connection with those thoughts will happen early on, but we believe that, just like The Well, the opportunities and God's purposes will become clearer as we step out in faith.

The Well has exceeded all expectations, God has blessed us, He has taught us that it's a slow burn to be trusted, for folks to open up, and for that precious sense of family to gel folks together.

We believe that as Kings 'takes action', moves into a place where we step into the unknown, trusting Him and doing some of the practical good housekeeping as we feel the way He is opening up, so we will be wowed by the unexpected paths which meet the growing profile we will have to bless the community.

We do not know everything, so cannot present a polished plan, let's step out in faith and see what God opens or closes for us.

Wednesday Morning Prayer 16 July

Ross: Had a picture of huge holdall bursting at the seams with God's glory, love, peace and light as a representation of this building and He wants us to unzip it so that He can expand.

John Clarke: Haggai 2:9 "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house," says the Lord.

Zechariah 4:6 "Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit " says the Lord.

Wendy: The Lord saying step out and do new things.

Dave: Is 54:2 Enlarge the place of your tent.. strengthen your stakes.

Tuesday 22nd July Prayer

Tim: Let go of control, so we don't limit what God wants to do.

Thoughts from Christen shared Sunday 20th July to be corrected by Christen later

When Christen joined Kings Church as leader he felt God saying that Kings Church was to be a Wokingham-based community church near to the centre of town and there was a sense that when it expanded to about 150 it should plant out, creating other smaller churches, each growing to up to about 150 people.

John on same evening 20th July

In the early 1980s when the Hilltop Church was growing too large for its building, Steve Prince (18 years old) had a word to the effect that the church should plant out, and Derek Munday, an Elder, had a word about this being when churches reached about 200 people. Subsequently, in the 1980's 7 churches were planted out and the group became Kings Church. At a later stage after some years of decline in the number of churches, Kings Church Wokingham sought God's guidance as to whether the church's vision was still to plant out or to become one large church. No prophetic input was received from praying to change the vision to plant out.

John's recollections from Tuesday evening 29th July (Can contributors correct)

Susan: We are to be a beacon which people will be drawn to.

Christen: Some in the meeting have been operating with a hand tied behind their back but are being freed so that things will be easier in future.

Tim: The soil is ready for growth. We are being challenged to grow in new ways.

June: There is a step up in land level between Kings Place and the Hope & Anchor. Similarly, we are taking a step up in several ways, - in our faith, in our activities and involvement with the town, and in other ways too. Further in and higher up.

Spike: Saw us taking off our coats and preparing to enter the Hope & Anchor. Saw us becoming more like Jesus.