



ROCHDALE EVANGELICAL CHURCH



Prayer Letter 19 – January 2024

Then [Jesus] said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.' (Matt. 9:37-38 NIV84)

REVIEW OF 2023

I hope that you had a good Christmas and New Year. As we start 2024, I thought it would be helpful to briefly review for you how 2023 went for us at REC and look forward to 2024.

We were really grateful to become a fully independent church and charity (CIO) in 2023. This was a huge amount of work, but felt like a real achievement.

Throughout 2023 we continued to seek to make disciples. We did this with efforts to reach out with leaflets, magazines, personal evangelism and special Sunday meetings (e.g. Family Services and Christmas Services). We also continued to look at the Bible and pray together to grow as disciples.

We have been grateful to God and to those who give financially to support REC and remain financially healthy as a church.

However, we've been disappointed as numbers attending have gone down over the year, despite quite a number of visitors. Having grown steadily for our first couple of years, it feels like we're mostly back to where we started, with a regular 10 people on a Sunday and a few more at the monthly Family Service. There have been lots of perfectly sensible

reasons for this, but it is hard after 3 years of hard work.

Those who come are very committed, but a number are now suffering from quite serious ill-health, so a lot of the practical work falls on a few people.

Our prayer and planning is currently revolving around these realities.



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024

Part of what we're planning is to keep going seeking to make disciples. At the start of January we did a short series of "Can you believe...?" questions, seeking to answer some of the common questions people might have, especially having heard the Christmas stories.

We're about to start a new series looking at Galatians on Sundays (linking it in with Acts,

which we have been looking at). We're continuing to meet together each week at Growth Group doing Bible study (1 Timothy), praying together and also reading a book together (we split into men and women and are reading *12 Faithful (Wo)Men*).

We are also about to start having the Lord's Supper together once a month in the services, something that was contingent on becoming an independent church so we could manage it appropriately.

However, we recognise that, having got everything in place to be a church, we are at risk of declining out of existence!

We'd like to grow in two ways:

1. Like every church we want to see our evangelistic efforts be effective, so new people trust in Jesus and join the church. We want to review what we're doing and what we could do to enable this.
2. We recognise we need help and so are looking for workers for the harvest field of Rochdale (Matthew 9:38). I.e. we're looking for committed Christians who would like to join us, both to help practically with the church and to help with our efforts to make disciples in Rochdale. We don't want to recruit negatively ('sheep-stealing'), but pray people might come as 'missionaries' with the support of their churches.

PRAYER POINTS

When we think about evangelism, Paul sets us to pray (Colossians 4:2-4) and when Jesus raises the issue of workers for the harvest field, it is in the context of praying to the Lord of the harvest

to provide them (Matthew 9:38), so we both need and appreciate your prayers.

I'd really appreciate if you would focus your prayers for us this time in these areas.

Please give thanks:

- The administrative work of setting up the church and CIO is largely complete;
- For the commitment of our small band of believers.

Please pray for:

- Our review of what we do and could do – that we would be wise and fruitful;
- Our efforts to share the gospel personally and as a church – that the Lord would bring people to know him;
- Faithful brothers and sisters to come and join the work in Rochdale (supported by the churches they are now in) and for us as we work out the best ways to encourage this;
- The future of REC to be long-term and stable as a gospel-centred, disciple-making church in Rochdale.

Thank you for praying and if perhaps you might be the answer to any of these prayer requests (could you join us?) or you know someone who might be, please use the details at the bottom of the page to contact me.