

Doing Church Differently:

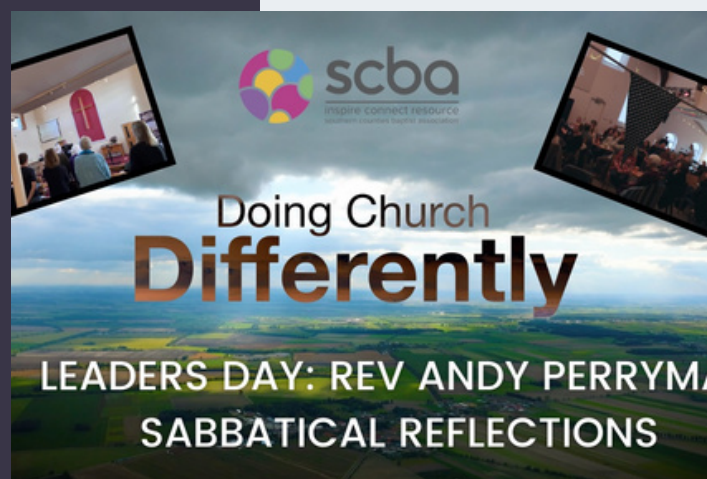
Sabbatical Reflections

His reflections Include:

- **Deconstruction of Sunday gatherings:** So much time and energy goes into Sunday worship, yet discipleship often grows more deeply in small groups.
- **Who are we really reaching?** Many “new” members are already Christians, often middle-class and retired; very few are new believers.
- **Encounters on sabbatical:** Andy met churches doing things differently: outdoor gatherings, intergenerational worship, participatory approaches, and communities shaped by mission rather than tradition.

Values he observed:

- Mission-focused: intentionally reaching those outside the church.
- Multi-voiced: creating space for everyone to contribute, not just one leader.
- Intergenerational: learning and worshipping across ages together.
- Small and simple: spaces where discipleship happens in relational ways.
- Replicable: led by “ordinary” people, not dependent on professionals.
- Patient and slow: transformation takes time; faith journeys aren’t quick fixes.



Summary

Rev. Andy Perryman (Ashley Baptist Church) shared insights from his sabbatical exploring “church done differently.” As a minister in a traditional setting, he realised that while churches are often busy with toddler groups, cafés, coffee mornings, and school links, these rarely translate into people joining Sunday worship.

Instead of trying to funnel people into Sunday services, Andy began asking whether churches need to reimagine different forms of church that connect more naturally with those outside.

Francis Chan’s asks: If all you had was a Bible, how would you imagine church? Does it look like what we currently do? And can you live with that?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How much of our church energy goes into Sunday mornings compared to other ways people encounter Christ?
- Who is actually joining our church? Are we reaching the people we hope to reach, or mostly those already like us?
- Where do people in our church genuinely grow most as disciples: Sunday services, small groups, or elsewhere?
- What might it look like to “do church differently” in our community?
- Which of the values Andy noticed (mission-focus, multi-voiced, intergenerational, small, simple, replicable, patient) resonates most for us right now?
- How comfortable are we with church being “slow” :planting seeds rather than looking for quick results?
- How would we answer Francis Chan’s challenge: if we only had the Bible, what would we imagine church should look like?

Bible Study

Theme: Rethinking Church: Faithful to Scripture, Open to Change

Opening Question:

When you picture “church,” what’s the first image that comes to mind? How much of that is shaped by the Bible and how much by tradition?

Read Together:

- Acts 2:42–47 The life of the early church.
- 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 Many parts, one body
- Matthew 28:18–20 The Great Commission: making disciples.

Discussion:

- In Acts 2, what practices marked the early church? Which of these are strongest in our community and which are weakest?
- How does 1 Corinthians 12 challenge us about who gets to “speak” or “lead” in church? Are we multi-voiced or mainly one-voiced?
- Jesus commands us to “make disciples.” Where are people in our church actually growing as disciples?
- Andy noted that many church “newcomers” are already Christians. How do we respond to the challenge of reaching those outside faith?
- Of the values Andy observed (missional, multi-voiced, intergenerational, small/simple, replicable, patient), which do we most need to embrace?
- Francis Chan’s desert island question: If we only had the Bible, what would church look like? How close are we to that vision?

Prayer Response:

- Pray for courage to experiment with new ways of being church.
- Pray for openness to slow growth and patience with God’s timing.
- Pray for your community: that God would show you where people are spiritually hungry.

Practical Next Step (for the group):

- As a group, identify one way your church could experiment with being more mission-focused, participatory, or intergenerational.
- Encourage each person to spend time this week asking God: Where are you already at work in my community, and how can I join in?