

Vision Night November 2011

Report

Introduction:

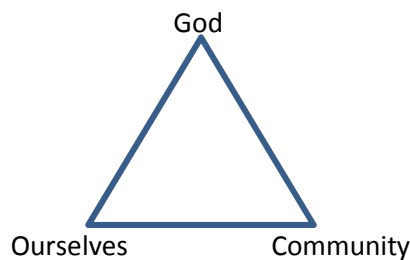
Hebrews 10:19-25 speaks of the encouragement in light of the work of Christ as our great high priest to corporately:-

- 1) Draw near to God (in salvation and assurance)
- 2) Hold onto the faith which we profess (amongst ourselves and others)
- 3) Spur each other in the church on to love and good deeds (for each other and others)

In our vision statement we have these three aspects of our purpose together of what it means to be followers of Christ

- A) Helping people meet God
- B) Encouraging one another
- C) Being good news to our community

You can look at this in diagram form and see that our activities have three points of focus, the upward focus towards God, the inward focus to ourselves and the outward focus to our community. All of our activities support at least one of these. Our challenge is to work at keeping all three equally strong.



In the summer the Focus group met and outlined six areas of ministry which would shape our next Mission Action Plan. We used this as the structure for our evening together under six headings.

I] Prayer

- Create new opportunities to pray with and for each other and our areas of service and influence.

Gweneth reported on the new weekly prayer meeting which seeks to be outward focused to pray for blessing on our community. We listed the opportunities for prayer: weekly, monthly, in services, small groups, informal groups or pairs, and individually. It was suggested that alternative styles of praying should be made provision for so that there may be full participation at our prayer gatherings because not everyone will pray out loud.

II] Buildings and Reordering

- Start and continue our building project within our existing budget and invite further giving when appropriate.

Olive updated us on the kitchen improvements including cooker and dishwasher. The damp has gone after we re-routed an overflow pipe and sealed up the hole in our damp-proofing membrane. Andy outlined the proposals for reordering work, starting with Kitchenette, heaters in the Halls, then moving onto decoration of toilets and Hall. After this the Focus Group plans to continue with the list as far as financial resources stretch noting it was all desirable but not all currently affordable and decisions will have to be made.

III] Finances

- What can we do to improve our current situation, and long-term financial prospects?

The seven month accounts were circulated, noting an increase in giving/donations and hall hire and with expenditure within budget. The parish treasurer David Wright has indicated that £25,000 of Reserves have been dipped into rather than the £33,000 expected with £61,890 remaining. The other Ascension funds were not available to the meeting, but stand at: Building £1,408, Worker £9,288, Flower&Garden £1,904, Sunday School £12,546, Legacy £83,341. We are anticipating a legacy gift of unknown value from the estate of Joan Pollard.

IV] Helping people come closer to God and encounter God

- Identifying the different points of contact we have with each other and God
- Create our aims for the different levels of participation we have
 - Sunday services
 - Small groups
 - As individuals
- Asking questions about who is our congregation, what themes are relevant for us to tackle on Sundays, how we can be practical in our application of the Bible... so that we help people to come closer to God, encounter God and grow.
- 'strength for service' – that our times together help us to serve God during the week.

We are nothing without first of all knowing and experiencing God's life in our lives so this is the first priority. One of our strengths is that we all live locally. What if we could organise ourselves locally too: if our small groups were mini church communities and looked to serve their immediate neighbours. Neighbourhood church, if you like, so that each member of the church had a group that was within walking distance and would be a place where he/she had the opportunity to grow spiritually on every level: encountering God, serving their brothers and sisters, and reaching out to the community. Andy showed us a map to illustrate how neighbourhood communities could work.

Some ideas mentioned in discussion:

- a greater variety of music styles on Sundays;
- different styles of service; coffee first, meet around tables;
- shorter sermons;
- if there is to be a sharing Sunday then give people notice (bible readings, themes etc) so that people can come prepared;
- 'community builds and encourages us'.

V] Supporting people in the church family

- Identifying the different points of contact we have with each other
- Building relationships
- Thinking how to serving the house-bound and elderly

Margaret outlined the plan to find a new location for our Long Lazy Day Away on Sat 9th June 2012 and to keep it as a social day, with opportunities for worship/reflection, community, sports and free time. We reflected that Refresh is more about this now than outreach.

Some ideas mentioned in discussion:

- we have a lot of points of contact of which we can make use;
- we could provide more for women;
- we could make an annual list of activities spreading them out through the year;
- how can we make known better the needs of individuals? – e.g. communication about those who are sick;
- people don't ask each other much for help - how can we become more aware and open to each other?;
- can we take extra meals from Friendship Lunches to the housebound?;
- can we do more practical things together? - 'working together, being together, praying together';
- make good use of the pastoral care network;
- role for small groups in looking out for people;
- more events and days out together that different people could organise;
- 'I am blessed by my church family'.

VI] Giving the best to our community

- Practical service
- Providing opportunities for people to know God
- See how a time and talents survey may help
- Becoming salt in our society.
- Families outreach

Emma outlined progress with Families and the encouragement of new contacts who seem hungry for community and for us to keep looking out for them and welcoming them, plans for a rota for Sunday school, and hopes for holiday clubs in Holy Week and August, as well as mentioning her personal plans to train for Children's Counselling and work to support herself.

Friendship lunches are nearly full and a large group comes from Lions Dene.

Margaret informed us of a planned evening event on 21 March when Henry Olonga would discuss his life in Zimbabwe, his cricket career and his faith as well as share his music with us. Andy outlined the Mark Drama 29 March – 1 April (and the opportunity to act in this), the Holiday Club in Holy Week, then Maundy Thursday leading to Easter Sunday church services. Margaret mentioned Ascension Arts (12-27 May) which would be extended over three weekends.

We didn't have time to discuss giving the best to our community but some further comments made were:

- hold another Alpha/Christianity Explored course soon;
- prepare Sundays to be more welcoming for families
- or create new forms of church or activity for families.

We closed in prayer in our groups and ended with the grace. £41 profit from the meal will go towards Friendship Lunches. Thank you to Anne, Olive and Margaret and the team who prepared the meal. Thank you to everyone for coming and contributing in such an encouraging way to your church.