

COMMITMENTS DECEMBER 2014

One Church - Three Communities

Recognising that we have come together as a single church to enable our life of Christian witness to be sustained, we commit ourselves:

- To a shared life of worship and prayer
- To building our personal relationships within the fellowship of the church

Recognising that between us we hold affection and responsibility for Christian witness in three different communities, we commit ourselves:

- To maintain, for the time-being and as far as proves possible, all three premises for worship and mission
- To explore fresh initiatives that build on the traditions of the past and enable all to share in the life and mission of the church.

Themes

Recognising that we need to equip ourselves, understanding the relevance of Christian faith in the lives of those in the community around us and creating opportunities to share our faith, we commit ourselves:

- To adopt the use of 'life themes' for our exploration of Christian faith and witness.
- To actively create opportunities to explore these 'life themes' with the wider community, including all ages.
- To explore creative ways to present a Christian perspective in this setting.

We need to remind ourselves why we have come together as a single church. It is simply that all three of our former congregations were reaching a point of being unable to sustain church life without great strain.

Eldership, administration, property maintenance and more besides have placed heavy obligations on individuals. There are ways round some things but finance is limited and the first call upon it is the Ministry and Mission Fund of the URC.

In terms of ministry the WM Synod scoped the three congregations to receive one stipendiary minister and there was a desire to make the most of that resource, not spreading too thinly.

Much progress has been made in building relationships, but more remains to be done.

There are things that each congregation has engaged in or supported that we wish to maintain, but recognise the need for fresh initiatives that will engage the communities in appropriate ways with Christian faith.

Themes are offered as a means of taking seriously the issues of human life and the experience of all people, exploring them through the eyes of experience of faith and practical belief. In a society where the Church bears sole responsibility for communicating Christian belief and way of life we need to utilise such 'bridges' if we are to fulfil our calling as Church.

As outlined in 'Mission Not Impossible' it is envisaged that such themes be explored both within our church life and in a wider public arena in a variety of ways, enabling us to share faith and something of our Christian fellowship.

The Lonely and the Isolated

Recognising the Gospel call to love our neighbour as we love ourselves and currently seeing the growing threat in our society of isolation, we commit ourselves:

- To seek ways of supporting the isolated in each community in partnership with others. (These might include home visiting, practical support scheme, 'Meeting Place' facility.)
- To support the development of the Generations Project in all our three communities, encouraging the participation of other churches.

Meeting Place

Seeing a need for relaxed welcoming hospitality space where informal church-community engagement can take place, we commit ourselves:

- To explore the development of such a resource in each community
- To pursue the development of a dedicated space at Christ Church

The Younger Generations

Recognising the Church's responsibility to share Christian faith with children and young people, we commit ourselves:

- To explore with organisations who use our premises ways of working with Life-Themes within their regular programs, with church participation.
- To create themed events to which the young can contribute.
- To work in partnership with tenant groups and other churches to meet the needs of the young.

Support Worker/s

Recognising that assistance is needed for tasks that are new or are a heavy responsibility, we commit ourselves:

- To explore how we may draw in or employ support for:
 - property management & administration
 - work with children and young people
 - enabling our mission plans

The Lonely and the Isolated

Exploring our 'Call to love' at the beginning of the year we spent time thinking and praying about where our calling is as a church. The personal situations of many of us, along with the identified issues in wider society together with existing commitments through lunch club, coffee morning and our hosting of a variety of supportive groups, led us to focus towards the elderly, isolated and lonely in our communities

Meeting Place

This initiative springs from a number of needs:

A place where church and community can come together, recognising that Sunday services do not offer the necessary opportunities for engagement. A place to welcome isolated individuals as well as groups who offer support to particular people (dementia cafe).

A place where life and faith can come together exploring themes in a variety of ways.

A dedicated 'Meeting Place' with good catering facilities at Christ Church is seen as resourcing 'pop up' places in Olton and Hobs Moat.

The Younger Generations

Our high age-profile means that any sustained program working with the young is not feasible. However, some work here could be possible on a more ad hoc basis. We have relationships with scouts, guides, after school and wrap-around, nursery, mums and tots and dance and drama groups and Kineton Green Primary School. Initiatives to make these more active relationships are in mind.

Support Worker/s

Again recognising our age-profile it is sensible to seek support where we can.

To have someone with the right gifts to look after lettings and property or to support work with children and young people or to assist forward our other plans with the isolated and elderly and 'Meeting Place' would be helpful. They may be paid or volunteers. The flat at Christ Church could be a practical asset in procuring such help.

Premises

In the hope that we may be able to maintain our three premises for mission and worship, but recognising that we do not have the personnel in order to do this, we commit ourselves:

- To share the responsibility with community and tenant groups, exploring appropriate ways in which to do this.
- Maximising the use of each premises to engage with the community both in terms of serving their needs and creating opportunity to encourage encounter with Christ and Christian faith.
- Olton - a focus to our work and our worship in relation to children and young people, especially in relation to Scouts and Guides, Kineton Green School, Orchids and Playgroup etc.
- Hobs Moat - a focus to our work and our worship in relation to the elderly, especially through the coffee morning, lunch club and relationships with Bungalow Clubs etc.
- Christ Church - a focus to our work and our worship with the isolated and lonely and supportive groups through an established 'Meeting Place'. Also for larger public events relating to themes.

Worship & Prayer

Recognising the centrality of worship to the Christian life but also that it is unfamiliar to the majority of present-day society we understand the need to lead people to faith and worship in ways that are meaningful in today's culture. So we commit ourselves:

- To create opportunities for worship through engagement with the wider community through themes and related activities.
- To regularly gather for prayer related to both the church fellowship and world issues.
- To include worship and prayer within our Cell Groups.

Acknowledging that opportunities for worship can be planned in the other two premises during a week, we commit ourselves:

- To gather for Sunday worship in
Please indicate where is your preference (Hobs Moat, Olton or Christ Church).

Premises

We are currently financially dependent on lettings. Our main issue with premises is management (fabric and lettings) which are onerous and time-consuming responsibilities.

Our premises are a key resource for mission. They fulfil this in our service of the community as we provide for many groups. However, we do not use them for evangelism (enabling others to engage with Christian faith).

We need to find a better balance.

Bearing in mind the estimated costs of upkeep over a ten year period we need to ensure that we make appropriate use of our premises bringing growth to our fellowship. We must make use of premises for church life and mission as the Synod would not wish us to be merely property agents. Having originally thought that we would need to dispense with at least one building we will need to review in time our holding of three.

Worship & Prayer

A commitment to exploring themes in worship will lead to more inter-active Sunday mornings and need space.

In seeking worship that is attractive to a wide variety of people different styles, times and places need to be considered.