

JANUARY 2015 - TURNING A CORNER

Reviewing the Commitments process

Looking forward to celebrating the life of each fellowship

Looking to the tasks and hopes ahead:

- Hobs Moat - SPC, Cell Group, expansion of activities?
- Olton - community groups, youth organisations, Churches Together projects
- Christ Church - Meeting Place, accessibility, parking,
- Public Profile
- Property management
- Transport

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2014 - EXPRESSIONS OF COMMITMENT

Reminder of the commitment of the URC, of Church Members and, generally, of ourselves as a Church. (see separate sheet)

A survey of more specific and personal commitments attracted 88 returns. (Analysis on separate sheet)

OCTOBER 2014 - A WAY FORWARD

Background

Plans for premises

Mission a priority

BULLETIN

Cell Group themes

The Tenants in the Vineyard

SEPTEMBER 2014

Sunday presentation of Mission Strategy "Mission Not Impossible"

JULY 2014 - LIFE & MISSION

Worship

Young People

Meeting Place

Olton Community - churches, youth organisations, residents association

JUNE 2014 - A LONG WAY IN A SHORT TIME

Encouraged by some bold steps

- January - decision to become one church - exploration of 'Called to Love'
- ACM - election of joint Elders' Meeting
- Away Day discussions - proposal of single Sunday worship (Neil Eldridge off rota)
- April decision for a single Sunday service - rotating around the three sites - adjusting roots, beginning to share customs and traditions

NEXT 12 months

- Mission - lonely and elderly, those living with dementia
- Partnerships
- Finance and Property
- Worship
- Fellowship
- Encouragement to voice concerns and ideas, participating in 'your church'

Assumption - we will maintain a presence in each community.

WHERE HAVE WE REACHED?

We have a strong Eldership of 13

Our list of Members (active and inactive) and Friends (c50) is 167. This amounts to around 120 actively involved in the life of the church or 'housebound/in care'. Some members now worship elsewhere - most for reasons of accessibility. There are some who are not, as far as is known, worshipping anywhere else.

Our Pastoral Care scheme needs to be updated in order to cover all participating or housebound/in care. An approach for this has been agreed, but needs activating.

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Cell Groups (4) continue to meet. Further development is needed to engage others.

Singing for Pleasure continues to be well supported at Hobs Moat and contributes to social events and to services in Deerhurst Court. New items for Sunday worship are practiced too.

The Neighbourhood Coffee Morning at Hobs Moat continues to be well supported.

The Lunch Club continues at Hobs Moat

The Monday Night Fellowship (church and community) continues at Hobs Moat

Sunday Worship at Christ Church generally attracts good congregations.

The Musicians group has drawn together and regularly lead pre-worship singing (continuing the Hobs Moat tradition). They also help the congregation learn new hymns and songs, enabling us to draw on the traditions of each original congregation.

Refreshments at the back of the church have enabled the building of relationships and have been valued (it is difficult to persuade people to go home!)

Word and Prayer was initiated to enable us to engage with the three communities through prayer. These have not attracted numbers. Word and Prayer in Olton continues on the first of each month, but phone call reminders seem necessary. Those in Hobs Moat and Christ Church have been discontinued.

Fellowship Prayers continues to help us to pray for members and friends of our church. This will focus in Hobs Moat's Quiet Place.

Praying with the Papers continues with limited support. A display in the Nattery at Christ Church helps others know of our prayerful concerns.

We have rationalised our Charity Support, but remain open to other appeals as needs arise.

Social Events are being planned at regular intervals.

The Coach Trippers continues

A new fortnightly venture, a bowls club, has begun.

Messy Church has had three 'outings' and is developing its life. It has attracted some non-church participation which can be built upon.

Moments - a dementia cafe has begun a weekly opportunity to offer support and has been welcomed by local adult care services. It is yet to develop.

The Generations Project supports Pastoral Links in three care homes. Worship is led (either regularly or occasionally) in seven situations. The possibility of developing the pattern of pastoral support, activities and worship with Churches Together in Olton is in its infancy.

PREMISES

All three premises are being maintained and continue to be heavily used by community groups. There has been some concern about the future, largely fuelled by local gossip, and we have sought to reassure tenants that any changes will be notified well in advance.

The use of both Hobs Moat and Christ Church premises by other Christian congregations contributes largely to our income.

The retirement of Franc Kelly at Christ Church has led to a re-organising of the lettings procedure there. This is almost complete.

A full Quinquennial Survey actioned by the Synod has been made of the Olton premises. This has confirmed and added to the matters requiring attention as identified by our previous survey. Including VAT, remedial works not including any redevelopment would take all the combined reserves we hold.

WHERE NOW?

Significant progress in the building of Church Fellowship has been made, recognising that there remains much to be done to build relationships and in the development of our patterns of worship and prayer.

We need to remind ourselves that our Church Fellowship is not the ultimate aim of what we are about, but rather to enable others to engage with Christ and Christian Faith. Our earlier considerations have taken note of cultural changes and a need to engage with people 'where they are'.

THEMES

Consideration has been given to those things that are key to human living and to which Christian faith offers a significant perspective, as a means of engaging with those outside the Church. Such themes have been used within our own life, particularly Cell Groups, but there is a need to purposefully use them for wider engagement.

Messy Church has helped us to see church as happening in a different way to traditional worship. These lessons are also being learned through the Generations Project's work in care homes. Exploration of the various means and places for doing this is needed (reference 'Mission is Not Impossible' diagram), with encouragement for invitations to participate to go to people outside the church.

We need to be mindful that our purpose in uniting three dwindling congregations was not to create a larger dwindling congregation, but rather to give us the strength and confidence to grow.

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