

SURG Bulletin

REALISING A VISION

An outline of issues and discussions on the way to creating a single 'Solihull United Reformed Church'.

The accompanying graphic shows in flow-diagram format the key issues that are each part of the discussions necessary between the three churches of Olton, Christ Church and Hobs Moat, as we work towards a future together.

The following text seeks to describe these issues in greater detail and pose the questions that need to be addressed in order for progress to be made.

MINISTRY

The present situation with 1.5 stipendiary ministers will not exist beyond 2015, when Mark's ministry to Christ Church will cease in the September.

Beyond that time a single stipendiary minister, Neil, will serve the pastorate.

Depending on what happens to the total combined membership, but assuming that it will be no greater than at present, there is a possibility that other pastoral responsibility will be given to the minister.

Our conversations have accepted that it may be possible for us to employ further ministry, depending on the emphases of our mission to the community around (community worker, youth worker, pastoral worker etc.).

Ministry does, of course, include what is offered by Church Members in a voluntary capacity as part of their Christian discipleship - as Elders, Treasurers, Cell Group Leaders, Pastoral Visitors etc.

Amongst the three congregations we need to be clear who is fulfilling these different ministries and that they are supported in what they do.

GOVERNANCE

Current experience tells us that we cannot sustain three separate churches, with their own Elders' Meetings, Treasurers etc. along with all the many other roles that are currently filled in order to sustain congregational life.

The Joint Elders' Meeting is keen that we move as swiftly as possible to becoming a single church, even while we continue to enable worship and mission in the three sets of premises.

With agreement, it is hoped to move to single Elders' and Church Meetings early in the New Year, with matters relating to individual congregations being addressed as necessary.

It is suggested that initially the single Elders' Meeting would have three Elders from each congregation serving it.

Church Meetings are likely to remain more locally focussed, but in the New Year the opportunity to have combined Church Meetings in conjunction with United Worship on a Sunday is likely to be taken, in order to ensure that the widest constituency can be involved in discussion and decisions about the future.

MISSION/OUTREACH

It is easy for our discussions about the future to focus on the congregations we are at present. However, a key part of our Christian life together is in response to our calling to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with those around us.

While these matters may seem secondary to those relating to our worship and fellowship they are in fact primary as it is our mission which will

- shape where and how we operate as a church
- require certain resources (premises, ministry, finance etc.)

- enable congregational growth for the future

Conversations regarding this aspect of church life need to part of all the other strands of discussion.

PREMISES

We have three sets of premises offering different spaces in different places. We have obtained professional survey reports on each, indicating the likely costs to bring them to good condition over the next ten years. With these costs set against the current income of each congregation (personal giving and hall rentals) the clear conclusion is that we cannot sustain and manage three sets of premises.

Needing to reduce our premises our discussions will need to conclude as soon as possible how we might do this.

These discussions will need to take into account:

- Requirements for worship, mission and fellowship.
- Maintenance and management.
- How surplus premises might be disposed of?
- Restrictions on each premises for development or sale.
- Are there income needs to be considered?

Note: It is anticipated that some proceeds from the sale of premises will be available to bring other premises up to a good specification for future use.

FINANCE

As part of the considerations of governance the Joint Elders' Meeting is looking towards a reconciliation of how the three sets of accounts are presented in order that at an appropriate time they might be amalgamated for a single church institution.

Income and the proportions received from personal giving and hall lettings and the possibilities for the future are matters which need to be faced as we consider the viability of the church.

WORSHIP

We are currently sustaining worship in three centres with United Worship once a month (fourth Sunday). The Joint Elders' Meeting has expressed some enthusiasm for moving to United Worship on a weekly basis. An initial rotation around the three buildings may be a step on the way to Sunday worship being focussed in one place when the decision about our premises is made.

Efforts need to be made to include the different worship traditions from each congregation.

Alongside this transition discussion and practical initiatives are needed in order to sustain activities in each neighbourhood currently served by premises for worship, prayer, mission and supporting Christian discipleship.

PASTORAL CARE

There are currently different models around the three churches, from Elders having lists to individuals relating to another individual. We will need to develop a new and coordinated system, bearing in mind geography and where people live and also existing relationships.

FELLOWSHIP & UNITY

Our fellowship together and our unity as a single church needs to be built with purpose. A number of different strategies and events will enable this:

- United Worship
- Cell Groups
- Shared mission and social activities
- The SURCs Newsletter
- Individual efforts to build personal relationships across the congregations.

Ministry

Exploration of other ministry that might be enabled

Governance

Joint Elders' Meeting (3 rep from each Dedicated Elders' Meetings continue for local concerns)

Single Elders' Meeting (3 reps from each)

Advice from Synod

Premises

Property Survey
Relative costs of maintenance
Future possibilities re use

Joint Property Group (not treasurers)

Which premise to keep/use?
What for the rest?

Finance

Reconciliation of presentation of accounts

Unification of Accounts with restricted funds

As United Worship develops a sharing of the ethos of each church is needed towards creating a new worship ethos for the united congregation.

No firm decision has been made re. pattern of rotation. We seek the least confusing

Worship

United Worship monthly rotating round premises

United Worship weekly rotating round premises

United Worship weekly (single premises)
Other alternative worship events

Cell Groups
Generations Project

Development of alternative worship events

These might include: Weekday on church premises, Cell Group Celebrations, Care Home Worship, Home Communions etc.

This will need to develop naturally, as it depends on personal relationships. However, there is a need to ensure that it is happening for all throughout.

Elders
Cell Group
Buddy System

Cell Group
Buddy System
Pastoral Coordinator

Pastoral Care

Where is Church
How does it happen?

Fellowship & Unity

Comprehensive plan for worship, social and other events. Also for communication

Church Meetings
Elders
Cell Group Leaders

Invitational
Cell Groups

Consideration of 'edge' people

Consideration of youth and children

Community engagement through premises

Sothhill URC
final goal/hope

Elders Meeting would consist initially of 3 Elders from each church. These would oversee other practical 'teams' dealing with property, finance, outreach, social & fellowship etc.

Church Meeting would likely take place in conjunction with Sunday worship, accompanied by wider activity and lunch together.

A single Church in term of governance and finance. One Church Meeting, one Elders' Meeting, reconciled and shared finances.

Focus on Cell Groups as the basis for Church building, close fellowship and spiritual support. These also part of a strategy for growth.

A single worship focus on a Sunday morning, but with alternative worship events in other places and at other times in order to cater for the communities served by the original churches.

A relationship with the Generations Project might encourage worship in care and sheltered home settings.

Ministry to be led by one stipendiary minister and include others paid/voluntary ministers. These might include: community worker, youth worker, parish nurse, families/pastoral worker.