

SOME BACKGROUND

- Our membership and congregations have been focussed in three communities and we would wish to continue to serve these communities as may be possible.
- We took the path we have to become a single church because we could not have sustained three churches for long. This includes the time and energy required to maintain the premises.
- In order to identify criteria by which we might decide about the use of our premises, we have considered our mission and the purposes for which premises would be a resource.
- We are mindful that, currently, rental income from our premises covers a significant deficit between personal giving and our obligations to the URC Ministry & Mission Fund.
- We are not accustomed to engaging in 'mission', but now must make it a priority. This is because society has changed and awareness of Christian faith is now the sole responsibility of the Church.
- 'Mission Not Impossible' offers a plan whereby we as a Christian community might explore our faith in relation to everyday life and experience, through 'themes'. This is also offered as a means through which we can engage with the community around us.
- We have recognised our limitations and are aware that we need to build partnerships with other churches and the community.

MISSION FIRST

There are three responsibilities that we have as a church. Worship of God, to share our faith in Jesus Christ and to serve God in the needy around us.

At the beginning of this year we reminded ourselves of the commandments of Jesus, that we should 'love God and our neighbour as ourselves' and it is from responding to these that our three responsibilities spring.

To simply be a worshipping community is not fulfilling our Christian calling, and as experience tells us we would rapidly dwindle as a Christian presence.

Our service of God through serving the needy is part of our current church and personal lives and we also identified the growing challenges of the isolated and lonely in society when earlier this year we asked ourselves who we are 'called to love'.

We now also need to consider (Mission Not Impossible proposal) how we enable others to engage with Christ and Christian faith.

It is these things that we hold in mind as we consider our premises.

A PLAN FOR OUR PREMISES

Why is this being proposed now?

- To enable people to glimpse how our mission plans may take shape in our premises.
- There are many of our congregation who are unsettled by the temporary nature of our existence at present and who are desperate to find a more settled place. It is hoped that to now consider mission and resources (including premises) together will lead us to a quicker decision.
- There are likely changes in ministry and there is need for a clear vision for the future.

OLTON

The most costly to bring up to standard and maintain. The one situation where the local community is focussed and might have the ability to take responsibility for the premises for its activities.

How can we enable the premises to be available to the community and possibly our own use on occasion, without SURC bearing the responsibility or the cost?

A recent meeting with Olton churches, Councillors and Residents' Association enabled us to share our situation. There is a clearer view that we as one part of the Olton community do not bear sole responsibility for accommodating community groups and that this responsibility might be shared.

Form a Management Group of key groups (including SURC) with the brief to manage and maintain the premises, funded solely from rental income. Further fund-raising not being SURC's sole responsibility. In this way the community can be encouraged to take responsibility and the reality of the costs will become clear, enabling a long-term plan to be formed.

SURC will be able to make use of the premises, as necessary and through the Management Group. This might include activities relating to our mission and occasional worship.

Mission activity would naturally relate to Olton Baptist Church and St Margarets, as they are already engaged in similar ways in the community.

We will need to consult Synod regarding such an arrangement. SURC will need to give the Management Group a clear constitution and powers.

Consideration will need to be given to a wider usage of the church space in particular.

HOBBS MOAT

The situation where we are already serving the local community. The premises are easy to maintain and activities can continue. As mission plans develop consideration may be given to expansion of activities that support the isolated/lonely. Some worship opportunities may be developed, especially during the week.

Some early enquiries have been received regarding the use of the premises on a Sunday by Solihull Presbyterian Church, which can be explored further.

CHRIST CHURCH

The least 'parochial' of our premises. Being 'town-centre' - best placed as a mission resource.

Focus for Sunday Worship.

Development of our mission plans through a 'Meeting Place' in the John Palmer Hall, along with ensuring good disability access to all levels.

Exploration of the employment of a 'Mission Enabler' (to 'cover' some of our limitations) for whom the Flat would be available at latest in January 2016.

In time - we can consider making the church space more flexible to serve our mission plans.

TOWARDS A DECISION

This is a first presentation and folk will want to explore this in greater detail. Opportunities are to be arranged during November for this to happen. Cell Groups will also be giving this attention.

You are encouraged to pray about this. We each have to place before God our hopes, our past, our prejudices, our calling and gifts, for we are seeking God's plan for us.

The Elders will consider how this difficult decision might be made. It will likely not be a straight yes/no, but a series of decisions that will enable the church to express commitment to different aspects of our life and witness, for which our premises are a key resource.

At the Church Meeting on 14th December we will 'take the temperature' as to whether we are in a position to make this step. If not then, we will seek to do so early in the New Year. This would mean completing another full cycle of worship in each of our premises before adopting a new plan in March 2015.

Rev. Mark Fisher
October 2014