

The New Year is a time for taking stock and making resolutions, full of hope and expectancy yet based on a realistic view of who we are and what we may enable to happen.

An earlier Bulletin 'Realising a Vision' identified a number of areas in our church life that needed to be considered. One discussion, relating to Governance (how we are constituted and governed as a church), has led to strong encouragement for us to move towards becoming a single church and this is to be progressed over the next few months with decisions by both joint and individual church meetings.

There has also been a strong sense of frustration on other matters, largely because we have not identified clear criteria for making decisions about our three sets of premises. However, **mission and outreach** are seen as primary considerations that will help us understand better what premises are required and where these should be situated. This is to be the focus of our attention over the next three months.

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## **CALLED TO LOVE**

This is our starting point, recognising that in seeking to follow Christ this overrides all else.

**Matthew 22.36-** 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'

Love is about relationship, so we consider first **who it is we are called to love**. This will lead to asking ourselves how we express this love and then where?

**WHO?**

**HOW?**

**Overleaf you will find an invitation for you to share who you feel we are 'called to love'** in our situation - as individuals and as a church.

**WHERE?**

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Below is a schedule of steps along the way over the next three months:

**On January 15th** representatives from our three churches have a meeting with Synod staff to learn more of the legal constraints that we will be working within, as well as possibilities for the future.

**Saturday 18th January @ Hobs Moat 10am - 12noon**

Opportunity for us to gather responses together. Nick Stanyon (Synod Evangelist) will help us identify key elements for our future life and we will explore ideas as to how these might be put into action in the neighbourhoods we serve.

**United Worship - Sunday 26th January @ Christ Church**

The outcomes from the consultation morning will be presented as a focus for prayer. Our worship will seek God's vision for us as a single church, gathering both our sense of calling and the particular gifts that we feel we have been given in order to fulfil this.

**Joint Church Meeting - as part of United Worship on 26th January**

During our time together a decision on a proposal that we become a single church will be taken. (This is not a decision about premises, but about having single Church and Elders' Meetings).

**Individual Church Meetings during March**

Will need to agree to the decision of the Joint Church Meeting in order to finalise the creation of a single church entity.

**Elders' Away Day - Saturday 29th March @ Holland House**

This will be time for reflection on how we perceive our calling as a church, the personal gifts we feel we have in order to fulfil this, along with the financial and property resources available to us.

# **CALLED TO - LOVE GOD, LOVE NEIGHBOUR, LOVE SELF**

## **YOU ARE ASKED TO ....**

Consider who you are called to love, both personally and as part of the church.

Recall the teaching and ministry of Jesus.

### ***Add to the sample list on the right.***

Consider those we already reach out to through the use of church premises.

Begin to think about 'how we express love' to these people or in these situations. This will prepare for the consultation on 18th January.

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### **How do these personal 'calls to love' shape the Mission of the Church?**

Those that are individually personal will shape our pastoral care.

Some, while individual, will be shared by others. These might be explored within church life in some way: Bible Study, sermon, prayer, Cell Group discussion etc.

Some may identified and accepted as key elements of the church's outreach. We will need to decide how (activity) and where (premises) these things take place.

As we respond to 'God at work' in all these loving relationships we will be naturally led to worship.

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***Here are some situations and examples of challenges to our calling to love - Please add to them:***

### **In a family situation**

Within a marriage/long-term relationship

Children you are no longer responsible for, or who live at a distance. When you can 'do' nothing.

Across a generational gap.

People holding different values/beliefs.

Through a crisis: - bankruptcy, through relationship breakdown, addiction.

In a one-way relationship or where there is no contact or communication.

### **Your neighbours**

Living close but distant, sometimes awkward, in dispute and with nothing in common.

### **Within the Church**

People you know but are not close to.

The young.

The disenchanting.

Through illness or bereavement or other crisis.

### **The Community**

The vulnerable - homeless, elderly in care, dementia sufferers, the poor.

Those who do not know God.

Those opposed to religion or Christian values.

### **Some Challenges**

When too many need my love.

When friends are distant.

When it is me that needs to receive.

I am dependent on others and cannot 'do' anything.

Learning to do it on my own.