

SURG Bulletin

June 2013

On Saturday 15th June the Ministers, Elders and some others met for a day's reflection deliberation and prayer at Holland House, Crophorne, Nr. Pershore. The aim was to look towards the future for the three churches as a combined pastorate with the oversight of one stipendiary minister (from 2015).

The life of our churches is complex and four main themes have been identified which will each need addressing in time, but to make the discussion manageable two were made the key focus of the day. These were:

- Fellowship - our life as part of the Body of Christ
- Place / Buildings

The other two: the Mission of our churches and our Organisational Relationship with each other and with the wider church remained in the background and will be the focus for future considerations.

Some items which had been the subject of positive discussion at a previous Joint Elders' Meeting were also 'set aside', for the sake of time, but do feature in the Outcomes of the Away Day.

A key factor that shaped the discussions was a focus on 'who we are'. We acknowledged how easy it is to dream of the church we would like, easily building a fantasy that bears no relation to what is truly possible with the realities as they are. Out of 'who we are' we were encouraged to seek 'the best us' in order to offer 'better service to God', not simply what might please people. Our discussions needed to be realistic.

From the outset we acknowledged that the Away Day was part of an ongoing process. We are not working towards a goal that we already have in mind, but rather taking considered, prayerful steps, towards what God may make of us.

An Assumption

Our discussions were based on the assumption that we would seek to maintain a 'presence' within each of the neighbourhoods we serve. However, the nature of that 'presence' will be an outcome from our ongoing research and conversation.

Basic Questions

We began by looking at who we are - (consider numbers of people involved in each church, age-profile) and the activities that help create and maintain our fellowship life together (worship, prayer, pastoral care, social activities etc.)

Bearing in mind that activities are increasingly taking place in the Cell Groups and within the Group of Churches, as well as in the three neighbourhoods we serve, we considered what happened most appropriately in each setting.

Consideration was then given to the resources that are required in order to maintain this fellowship activity - people, finance, training, meeting space etc.

This led naturally to a consideration of our various premises, not only as space for our own activities or as space for community groups (which we might consider part of our mission) but also as necessary income generators to keep us financially viable.

AWAY DAY OUTCOMES

Immediate Action

These to be taken to the three Church Meetings in June/July

- Monthly united worship - 4th Sunday of the month @10am - to begin in September 2013
- Bi-monthly joint Elders' Meeting - with time for domestic matters, as necessary
- Single Magazine - to be introduced after consultation - each church contributing to the calendar, news of the fellowship, notices of events etc.
- Social Event Co-ordinating Group (2 from each church) - seeking to plan 'group events' rather than simply co-ordinate the plans of three churches - A possible first meeting on 19th July would take over from the OurCare group at Olton.

Research

This is work that is needed to help us as a group of churches understand who we are and our dependence, our commitments and obligations. Also, to enable us to be realistic with ideas we might have.

Finance

- Income - where does it come from (giving/fundraising/lettings), on what are we dependent, what is our long-term financial viability?
- Obligations - MAM (URC for ministry etc.), other ministry costs, fellowship costs (services, admin, insurances etc.
- Expense - buildings and maintenance etc.

Buildings

- Survey estimated costs to bring each 'up to spec' as public buildings.
- Possibilities - development for smaller scale activity, sale/part-sale, lease.
- Commercial possibilities and planning restrictions.

People

- Who are we? - memberships, age-profile, geographical mapping.
- What are our hopes and what possibilities might we share in?

Progressing

These are other things that are planned to help us keep the process of re-shaping our three churches as one Pastorate moving and all members informed.

- Bulletin (this is it!) - to keep congregations informed and elicit responses on particular issues.
- Members consultation - at an appropriate time (probably in the New Year) when thoughts are a little clearer and as we move towards some decision-making.
- Elders' Away Day - March 2014
- Pastoral Care - bearing in mind the role of Cell Groups, reduced numbers of Elders and changing relationships between the churches, to explore different models for pastoral care.

Underlying Considerations for the Future

How do we maintain fellowship life, in an acceptable way, in each of the three neighbourhoods currently served by our churches?

Our plans for the future are not for 'maintenance'. How do we propose to encourage other people to join us in our Christian fellowship together?

IF THERE ARE QUESTIONS YOU WISH TO RAISE OR TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROCESS PLEASE SPEAK TO ONE OF THE ELDERS, NEIL OR MARK.