



Christ the Servant Church
Serving the Community in Faith and Hope

Church Family Away Day **16th February 2008**

A Shared Vision

Introduction

On 16th February 2008 17 adults and 6 young people from our church shared a day together at St Michael's Church Hall in Aughton, to reflect on the life of our church and to consider our vision for the future. This report records the various ideas suggested and considers the ways in which they can be developed.



Session I - “Health Check”

In the first session we considered our current strengths and weaknesses using “the seven marks of a healthy church” from Robert Warren’s book “The Healthy Churches’ Handbook”. The Handbook is based on over ten years experience working with churches across the country.

The seven marks of a healthy church are identified as:-

1. **Being energised by faith** - having worship that moves people to experience God’s love and providing opportunities for people to be nurtured in the faith.
2. **Having an outward looking focus** - being deeply rooted in the community and being proactive about justice and peace issues locally and world wide.
3. **Seeking to find out what God wants** - discerning the Spirit’s leading rather than just doing what interests us. Developing a shared vision.
4. **Facing the cost of change and growth** - while embracing the past, daring to take on new ways of doing things, being willing to take risks and respond creatively to challenges.
5. **Operating as a community** - nurturing relationships so that people feel accepted and everyone’s gifts are valued and used. Working as a team and sharing in ministry.
6. **Making room for all** - being open to newcomers and welcoming to people of different ages, social & ethnic backgrounds, mental and physical abilities etc.
7. **Concentrating on doing a few things well** ie quality rather than quantity - using resources wisely and not being overstretched.

Everyone completed a score sheet and these were collated to give an overall impression of our strengths and the areas needing more work.

In this exercise it was felt that at Christ the Servant our greatest strengths lie in being welcoming and open to all and sharing a sense of community as the church family.

We felt positive about our current worship and the ways in which we can grow in faith, although we recognised that there is still room for development.

Our weakest area was identified as seeking God's will and being more outward looking in our focus, particularly regarding justice and peace issues in our world. We recognised the value of all we currently do within the community and the various groups we support and run, we also recognised the part the new community project would have to play in our mission but it was still felt that this was an area we could develop further in the future.

During this first session our young people created a picture of what they liked and disliked about our church. These were:-

Likes - People, some of the songs, Brigade, disco, camping and trips

Dislikes - The leaking roof, some of the songs, litter around the building



Session 2 - Worship & Spirituality



In October 2007 the DCC said they wanted to explore different worship whilst maintaining the existing. On the away day we split into small groups and looked at ways in which the existing worship could be enhanced and then considered what else could be offered at different times.

During the final session of the day we worked as a whole group to identify which suggestions could be progressed in the short term. The feedback from the groups is listed below, together with the actions.

Existing worship

- **Sunday time and format** - Time good, 10am - 11am ish is just enough. Format good. Would like to include small changes throughout the year to reflect the seasons. Like the new sheets.
- **Family Service** - Good. Include hymns the children know and action songs.
- **Hymns** - Singing is good. Need to have more well known hymns. Like a good sing-a-long, with up beat tempo. Would like to learn some new hymns. Music - Include music on CD or Solo artist during communion when the congregation are receiving and also to give Jean some space.
- **Interactive** - Have more interaction in services. Use modern technology.
- **Communication** - Better instructions given to people to help them through the service, particularly for newcomers and especially at Baptisms. Wardens to give directions to people at communion etc. Have "Welcomers" on duty.
- **Reflection space** - Congregation to come into church before the service starts, not just before the Vicar. Encourage latecomers to use back entrance. Include more time for spiritual reflection in the service.
- **Reasons to return** - Increase advertising of services. Send invites to special occasions, reminders of anniversaries, prayer cards etc

Different worship/spirituality

- Would like some new services - liked the "Crib & Cake"
- Evening Youth Service aimed at 11 - 16 age. Music, worship, play instruments.
- Computer service "MSM"
- Develop links with far away churches - e-mail, writing, exchange (*DF volunteers going to Spain & Barbados, Funky got Rhyll!*)
- Have guest speakers - Evangelism, Healing Hands etc
- Over 40's service - including traditional hymns
- Early evening service 4pm? - Other venues eg Beechwood Court
- Healing Service
- Teddy/Pram Service for Nursery age
- Involve more lay people, trained so they know what they are doing.
- Have more discussion groups, Bible studies, children's group, meditations (Taize music etc), Lent groups etc
- Drama group
- Puppet show
- Sunday School
- School service in church weekly - parents can come too?
- Oaks - New branch in CTS?

Our Young people said:

"Move with the times!"

- Plays of parables eg The good Samaritan but more modern!
- Up beat songs with actions! During communion use old/slow songs. A mixture of hymns during services. On Brigade services use songs that are sung at Bishop Martin school.
- Area for children/Sunday school - so they can do what they want or draw
- Children make up prayers and tell them themselves
- Children to do readings - acted out
- Shorter services for children so they do not get bored
- Go to other youth services to see what they do
- Have a youth service - Monday 5 - 6pm

Our list of songs:-

All that I am, Bind us together, Who's the King of the jungle, Colours of day, God knows me, Thankyou Jesus, He's got the whole world in his hands, My God, Be still, Shine Jesus Shine, This little light of mine, Go tell everyone



Action Points

1. **Welcomers** - Agreed to start a rota for Welcomers. *Action: Within 3 months?*
2. **Reflection** - Agreed to encourage people into the worship space a bit earlier. Janet to welcome people from the front of church and then have a time of silence to start the service. *Action immediately.*
3. **Music during communion** - Have music from CD as first communion hymn, then one sung. Introduce new hymns through music during communion and at the start of the service. *Action immediately*
4. **Seasonal prayers** - Start introducing seasonal booklets with focused prayers. Booklets to be easy to follow without lots of options. Continue with separate service sheets for Parade services so they can be themed. *Action: Rolling programme to start at Easter.*
5. **Involve lay people** - Congregation to be involved in the process of developing the seasonal booklets where possible. Various sessions to be arranged for people to reflect on what we do and why eg aspects of the service, leading intercessions etc. *Action: Rolling programme over 12 months*
6. **Choice of hymns** - Undertake a "Congregation Top 20" survey, must be out of our hymn book. Follow up with a Songs of Praise service. Arrange a "Hymn sampler" event to try out new hymns. Start a small group to assist Janet and Jean with the selection of hymns. *Action: Within 6 months?*

7. **Communication** - Continue with “What’s On?”, website, special cards like the one used at Christmas. *Action: Immediately and ongoing*
8. **Parade Services** - Begin to use data projector as appropriate. Janet to work with Brigade to plan services where possible. *Action: Immediately*

Session 3 - Living our Faith

We started our final session by looking at the church website which was launched in October. Check it out at www.christtheservantchurch.org.uk Everyone was encouraged to keep it alive and active by submitting articles and photographs of events.

Then we began to explore ideas for our ministry with those who come for baptisms, weddings and funerals, our church social life, community involvement and links with schools. Mind you, it was after lunch and we were getting tired!

Baptisms/Weddings/Funerals

- Do a good baptism/wedding/funeral
- Baptism service - currently too long in main service and people don’t know what to do? *Action: Review after baptism in main service on 17th Feb!*
- Better advertising
- Follow ups - anniversary celebrations (e-mail, post, mail shots)
- Keep a mailing list of contacts if people give permission
- Create a church garden - better wedding photos, remembrance
- Rota to attend the service and welcome them *Action: See action point 1 under worship*

Fellowship/Social Life

- Strengthen the links with St Thomas the Martyr
- Need day trips
- Links with school
- Have a functioning social committee
- Send questionnaire in area, school and on website
- Have more interaction/communication between groups

- Need people willing to do back room work
- Ideas box in church

Community Involvement

- Good existing clubs - bring more people in
- Martins After School Club

Links with Schools

- School governors
- Other clubs - social/sport
- Improve links further - church services, "What's On?"
- Hold school leavers service

Our Young People Said:

We would like:-

- ICT lessons that are fun
- Sports Days/Competitions for kids and maybe adults if they want to.
Action: Come to Parish Picnic on 6th July!
- An ideas table - for going on trips after the service and a donation box to pay for them so that everyone does their bit. Suggestions for trips:- Flamingo land, Chester Zoo, Alton Towers, Football, Panto

Summary

The day provided us with some key points to be addressed in the short term and a number of suggestions which will need to be considered further as the DCC begin to develop our vision for the future. If you have any further comments or ideas please pass them on to Janet or members of the DCC.

Our day finished with an act of worship where we all placed stones of different shapes and sizes to build up a cairn, reminding us that we are all different but we are all pilgrims on a journey, fellow travellers on the road. Our joint mission is to "proclaim and live the truth in Jesus' name".



Our cairn