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St Bartholomew's Church, Marsden, Huddersfield

Transformational Plan

Process

St Bartholomew's recently completed the three years of the Wakefield Ministry Scheme (WMS); thus the Church and PCC are fortunate in having already carried out much of the preparatory work required by the Diocese's Transformational Plan (TP). That work, and the subsequent research and feedback from Church members, Lent Groups etc, is evaluated below, in the format set out in the Diocesan document, *Preparing a Transformational Plan for your Parish*, under the outline headings:

1. Understanding where we are
2. Seeking God's vision of where we should be
3. Working out how to get there

4. Understanding where we are

Early in the WMS process, the Core Group carried out two analytical studies – a SWOT analysis and a parish audit, the findings of which were predominantly very positive, and are set out below.

1.1. SWOT Analysis

1.1.1. Strengths

- 1.1.1.1. Strong church community
- 1.1.1.2. Caring ministry for each other and for non-churchgoers in the community
- 1.1.1.3. Junior Church, including recent developments
- 1.1.1.4. Committed new helpers for Junior Church
- 1.1.1.5. Work with schools (by Priest)
- 1.1.1.6. All-Age Worship format – well attended first-Sunday, with third-Sunday Family Communion introduced
- 1.1.1.7. Mid-week service, which has developed a different format, as it was previously hoped it would (e.g. dialogue format sermon)
- 1.1.1.8. More concentrated and focussed prayers at mid-week service
- 1.1.1.9. Regular weekly worship from a committed congregation
- 1.1.1.10. Very welcoming atmosphere
- 1.1.1.11. Monthly parish lunches
- 1.1.1.12. Many talents amongst congregation, including one Lay Reader, one member working towards the Bishop's Certificate in Pastoral Ministry, and a second Lay Reader about to start training
- 1.1.1.13. Good relationships with local United Church, including shared services and sharing of Christian Aid Week events and collections
- 1.1.1.14. Introduction of parish "fun events"
- 1.1.1.15. Large, beautiful church with potential for development for use throughout the week and for events other than worship
- 1.1.1.16. Parochial Hall, with stage, lighting etc
- 1.1.1.17. Growing congregation with a falling age profile
- 1.1.1.18. House groups are set up for Lent and have been well accepted over the years. In recent years this has now grown to Advent house groups which have been well received. Planning to introduce summer house groups over a 6 week period

1.1.2. Weaknesses and areas for development

- 1.1.2.1. Communication, including use of magazine, notice boards; website not yet fully developed; lack of adequate communication to the rest of the congregation of what the PCC, the Core Group, etc are planning and doing
- 1.1.2.2. Although house groups are well established in Lent and are becoming established in Advent, the attendance is fairly stagnant with the same people attending. There is a perceived need to grow the groups and it is hoped that the introduction of a six-week summer house group slot may encourage new people to come, provided proper attention is given to the format and content
- 1.1.2.3. Although the church is growing its young families well, there are currently few teenagers attending church and little connection to local young people, especially teenagers, once children move up to high school from the local infant and primary schools
- 1.1.2.4. The Church building is beautiful, but is large and high maintenance, so whilst its beauty and size are recognised as a strength, it must also be seen that, unless the building can be developed and possibly reordered to make it more usable, it is also a major weakness because of the need to find ever-increasing funds to maintain it.
- 1.1.2.5. Lack of sufficient storage at Parochial Hall

1.1.3. Opportunities

- 1.1.3.1. Third-Sunday Family Communion - a new initiative, building on the growth of the All Age Worship service held on the first-Sunday each month. It is hoped to develop the spiritual side of the newer young families by offering a more accessible service; as a new venture this needs committed work to build it up. The initiative will be reviewed by the PCC.
- 1.1.3.2. Running alongside the new third-Sunday service is the introduction of a Saturday evening communion service to try to make Church even more accessible to those people who work in the week and find Sunday attendance difficult
- 1.1.3.3. Development of work with young people, fuelled by increased numbers at Junior Church. There are regularly between 12 and 20 children and young people in Church/Junior Church each week, and at All Age Worship between 35 and 45 children in Church are present
- 1.1.3.4. The Church building is seen as an opportunity, as well as a strength and a weakness. There is already a number of musical events taking place due to the acoustic properties of the building and the number of people that can be accommodated. With some updating of the building, better staging, seating and provision of toilet facilities, the building would offer a better venue to a wider public
- 1.1.3.5. Opening the Church building for other use by reordering it may bring in additional income to help maintain the fabric and to pay its way
- 1.1.3.6. Additional use of the Church building could have the effect of further growing the congregation as others find the Church ever more accessible

1.1.4. Threats

- 1.1.4.1. Uncertainty of arrangements of ordained persons within the Deanery (Priest's Licence due to expire in 2010)
- 1.1.4.2. Lack of money – increases in insurance, fuel and Parish Share costs
- 1.1.4.3. The building itself poses a threat by its size and the amount of upkeep it requires

1.2. Community Audit

1.2.1. Statistics

- 1.2.1.1. Population: Approximately 4,500
- 1.2.1.2. Area: Encompassed within approximately 1 square mile, with a few outlying cottages and farms with the Church fairly central to the Parish
- 1.2.1.3. Racial Mix: Almost entirely white British; with less than 1% of the community being of any other racial mix or heritage
- 1.2.1.4. Age: Average spread of all age groups
- 1.2.1.5. Local Services and Distances travelled to them: Thriving village community with a compact centre where there is a range of small shops, mini supermarket, post office, cafes, pubs, clubs and other meeting rooms, as well as GP surgery, infant and junior schools, library, playgroups, after school club, sheltered housing and a railway station
 - 1.2.1.5.1. Secondary school is 4 miles away
 - 1.2.1.5.2. Hospital is 8 miles away, although some hospital services have now been transferred to Halifax, some 15 miles away
 - 1.2.1.5.3. Nearest bank is 3 miles away
 - 1.2.1.5.4. Regular bus service to Huddersfield and over the Pennines
 - 1.2.1.5.5. Regular train services to Leeds, Manchester and beyond
- 1.2.1.6. Community Activities: 3 clubs, bandroom, Parochial Hall, Mechanics Institute, sports hall, cricket, golf and bowls clubs, football pitch, National Trust, library, canal visitor centre, theatre group, two amateur dramatics groups. The village hosts an annual Jazz Festival, the Imbolc Celebration and Cuckoo Day, which bring in visitors from wider afield; there is a fledgling tourist industry
- 1.2.1.7. Employment: A former mill village (overwhelmingly textiles), where virtually all of that activity has now ceased. A considerable number of small businesses, some being run from units in the old mill buildings, but most of the major mills having been demolished.
- 1.2.1.8. Links/Relationships with wider Community: The church community is widely accepted by non-churchgoers, who will readily use its premises and services when they feel the necessity. The building is admired and the Parochial Hall is regularly visited by villagers and the wider community for social events

1.2.2. Inhabitants

Village property is predominantly private residential, with a very small level of council-owned stock of housing located in three small areas of the village. There are low levels of social deprivation.

There are many amenities for elderly people and thriving sports and social clubs. There is a good sports hall and many small clubs and societies.

Although not a dormitory village, good transport links result in many people commuting to the Leeds and Manchester conurbations for their work.

1.2.3. Motivation

Marsden is a close knit community. There are cultural segments but these operate side by side with others and overall people come together when the need arises.

The greatest changes have occurred as the local mills have closed down and people have had to seek alternative employment and/or lifestyles. Nevertheless the village has survived

this, as people have found other employment and small businesses have flourished. Overall the village is not impoverished and families are reasonably affluent. There are low levels of unemployment relative to other localities.

The village has a political history which was left wing in the past, having apparently developed from Luddite and similar dissident activity. Today there is less political activity and a less defined political majority.

There is a good relationship with the only other church in the village which is an amalgam of Methodist and Congregationalist churches, with shared services taking place throughout the year. There are no identifiable issues for faith groups, or indeed any other groups in Marsden.

There is also a good relationship with Churches Together in the Colne Valley, sharing a monthly interdenominational service and the annual celebration of the Women's World Day of Prayer

1.2.4. Needs, Issues and Aspirations

During the three years of the WMS course, and with the results of the above SWOT analysis and Community Audit, the Core Group found no obvious social need in the village; that is not to say that there are no problems in the neighbourhood.

The Church has identified that it would hope, in the long run, to develop some community work with young people, including those outside the Church community; however, there is a developing project in the village with teenagers and it may be that the Church can support this existing work in some way, rather than attempting to lead on a new project.

The Core Group found difficulty in identifying its third year project due to the plethora of amenities, groups and activities, as well as venues already established in Marsden. After much debate it finally decided to concentrate on "Back to Church Sunday" in 2007, but to develop this campaign into a year-round venture. Other members of the Church were drawn in to produce lists of people who were once regular in attendance but no longer attend with such regularity. Invitations were sent and some attended, some could not attend on that date but came at other times and many expressed their appreciation of the invitations. This was then developed, and invitations were sent out to cover other special occasions throughout the Church's year.

This project does appear to have been successful. The increased number of young families attending (albeit mostly on the first Sunday) has resulted in the Church successfully recruiting a further 16 helpers/teachers and completely re-vamping the way we do Junior Church. This work has been commended by the Diocese, and it was recently awarded £655 from the Bishop's Development Fund.

This work is ongoing and will require commitment and hard work on the part of a large number of Church members if it is to succeed. A major issue here is the potential loss of the Parish's part-time Priest, which is seen as a great threat to this work; although Church members are capable of running the new Junior Church arrangements, and the developments have come, in part, from the "Back to Church Sunday" project, much of the background work has also been carried out by the Priest both in the local schools and with marriage couples and baptism families.

5. Seeking God's Vision of where we should be

During the WMS scheme the Core Group studied and completed the "finding your Vision" component of the course. As a consequence, and after considerable thought and prayer, some two years ago, St Bartholomew's adopted the vision statement "*St Bartholomew's Church, Marsden is here to offer a welcome to all people, to worship God and to serve the community*". The statement is on documentation and in every Parish Magazine as a reminder at all times of the Church's aspiration.

Throughout the WMS course the congregation was informed and canvassed, and both spirituality and practical issues were kept to the fore. Groups studied "*Transforming Lives*" in Lent 2009 and, through worship, Bible reading and discussion, fed back ideas and suggestions under the five headings of that course. Many of the ideas and suggestions for developing worship and caring replicated those already discussed and documented during the three years of the WMS study undertaken by members of St Bartholomew's Church, however the following appeared to either build on the earlier work or were completely new ideas.

2.1. Worship

- 2.1.1. Healing service
- 2.1.2. Occasional outdoor services
- 2.1.3. Visual/audio aids to improve accessibility
- 2.1.4. Parent and child mid-week service
- 2.1.5. "Themed" Sundays – exploring different parts of the church, the liturgy etc, to include sermon series
- 2.1.6. Café church

2.2. Caring for each other

- 2.2.1. Opening up the Church one day each week for quiet prayer and contemplation
- 2.2.2. Adopt a person to pray for
- 2.2.3. More welcomers at services
- 2.2.4. Name tags to help people to get to know everyone else
- 2.2.5. Photo board showing the work being undertaken in the Church and by whom

2.3. Growing in God

- 2.3.1. Quiet/retreat days either in-house or away to another church
- 2.3.2. Keeping spiritual diaries
- 2.3.3. Bible study groups

2.4. Evangelism and Outreach

- 2.4.1. Having a notice board in the village
- 2.4.2. Regular prayers for different street/area of the community
- 2.4.3. Whit walks, perhaps jointly with the United Church
- 2.4.4. Welcome pack for new attenders
- 2.4.5. Posters with service times and church magazines in Library and Information Point

2.5. Community Involvement

- 2.5.1. Summer picnic
- 2.5.2. Continue and develop the social gatherings we already have
- 2.5.3. Look at new community projects in the village

3. Planning how to achieve God's purpose

3.1. By summer 2009:

- 3.1.1. Arrange rota to enable Church to be open at least one day per week throughout July and August 2009

3.2. By December 2009:

- 3.2.1. Develop a summer house group course
- 3.2.2. Develop "Welcome" pack for new attenders and visitors to Church
- 3.2.3. Explore opportunities to support the Marsden Youth and Community Project
- 3.2.4. Install photo board showing work being undertaken in Church and by whom
- 3.2.5. Explore possibility of church notice board in the centre of the village
- 3.2.6. Complete the development of the Church website and publication of information posters in the centre of the village
- 3.2.7. Redecorate the Parochial Hall

3.3. By spring 2010:

- 3.3.1. Liaise with United Church re joint Whit walk or similar outdoor service/procession of Christian witness
- 3.3.2. Arrange rota to enable Church to be open at least one day per week throughout May to September 2010

3.4. By autumn 2010:

- 3.4.1. Complete the installation of the disabled access to the main entrance
- 3.4.2. Firm up embryonic plans for reordering the east end of the nave and make the necessary applications for Faculties etc
- 3.4.3. Open the church for the Heritage Open Days 2010

3.5. By early 2011:

- 3.5.1. Complete a feasibility study to reorder parts of the Church building to provide toilet and kitchen facilities

St Bartholomew's Church, Marsden - Transformational Plan – Executive Summary

The SWOT analysis and parish audit carried out by the WMS group, and updated recently, showed a strong and committed church membership with a caring ministry, a very positive development of its work with children and many strengths within the congregation and the parish generally. It was recognised that uncertainties within the Deanery may have demoralising and negative effects on all of this work, unless a satisfactory and timely conclusion is reached.

The local community is close-knit, with many facilities and active groups, and with reasonable access to most services. Whilst not without problems, it has no major areas of deprivation. However, as in many communities, it was recognised that facilities and activities readily acceptable to those approaching teenage and up to young adulthood were lacking in the village. It was felt that the church may have a role to play in meeting this need by its support and assistance for the existing, but embryonic, youth project.

Research, study, prayer and discussion resulted in an action plan, summarised below; bullet points mark the key actions for the next twelve months and many points overlap.

Worship

To maintain and develop the church's existing range of services, particularly bearing in mind the needs of new worshippers, by including different experiences of worship and the opportunity for better understanding of the Bible, the liturgy etc.

- Develop a summer house group Bible study course, with potential for follow-up courses in the autumn and/or Advent.

Pastoral Care

To develop the general awareness to both worshippers and the community at large of the church's role in the community, including the roles of individuals within the church.

- Develop "Welcome" pack for new attenders and visitors to Church.
- Communications and general publicity – refurbish internal and external church notice boards to include photographs of church work, seek the necessary permissions for notice boards in the centre of the village and complete the development of the website.

Prayer and Spirituality

To develop a more focussed individual and communal spirituality.

- Further develop the existing range of worship throughout the weekly/monthly cycle, whilst regularly reviewing and adapting according to perceived need.

Evangelism

To make worship more visible within the community.

- Develop existing links with the United Church, including liaising re joint Whit walk or similar outdoor service/procession of Christian witness.
- Arrange rota to enable Church to be open for prayer, contemplation etc., at least one day per week throughout July and August 2009 and then from May to September 2010.

Community Service

To develop the church's role in community projects and its existing social life within the parish.

- Explore opportunities to support the Marsden Youth and Community Project.
- Redecorate the Parochial Hall.