

# Parish of St John the Baptist, Westfield

## Mission Action Plan 2010

### ***Background***

In summer 2009 the PCC established a working group to prepare a Mission Action Plan (MAP) as required by the bishops. The group consisted of: Evan France, John Burgess (until August), Dawn Archer, Margaret Moss, Sue Stephenson. They then co-opted Bryn and Marian Newman.

The group looked at various examples of churches in different situations and how they attempted to meet the spiritual needs of their communities. We then decided that instead of modelling an approach on somewhere that may be very different, it would be better to go straight to our own congregation to ask them to join us in looking for God's guidance.

Hence we invited all the church members to *Which Way?* an afternoon in September when we were led in an hour of guided prayer, focussing on the three elements of the bishops' ABC challenge: Attending to God, Building Christian community, Commending God's love to the world. After the time of prayer tea was served and each table was invited to put suggestions on post-it notes to stick on large sheets (one for each theme), before sharing Holy Communion to end the afternoon.

A substantial number of suggestions were put forward (Appendix 1). We then gathered all the suggestions and circulated them to the group, before spending two meetings discussing which should be prioritised, and another meeting drawing up a schedule (Appendix 2).

Broadly the schedule is divided into short term (to be at least started within a year) and longer term targets.

### ***Short-term targets.***

#### **Provide opportunities for discussion and meditation.**

We already have a weekly study group, and it was felt that the natural way to provide more would be if that group reached a size where it needed to divide. That does not seem to be the case at the moment.

There is also the traditional Lent study group, which appeals to a slightly different membership, as well as an afternoon group which met last Lent and may meet again.

Although there does not appear to be any clear demand for more of these regular groups at present, it may be that other events of a more one-off nature might encourage others to come to share and learn. One suggestion that will be taken forward is to encourage people to read a stimulating book on a spiritual theme and discuss it in a relaxed environment. This will be tried first using the book *The Shack* that a number have read and enjoyed.

#### **Develop the role of the Pastoral Team**

The team is currently feeling its way, and needs time to become comfortable with its present role before expanding. However training sessions could be implemented, perhaps using the guidance of the diocesan "Help for Parishes" team.

#### **Target some Family Service weeks to village groups**

Following the enthusiasm for the Football Club's anniversary service a couple of years ago, it was suggested that perhaps several times a year village organisations, or sub-groups within the community, could be invited to attend a special service to celebrate their contribution. Organisations and groups

identified include: sports clubs, WI, WCA, youth club, uniformed groups, the bereaved, newly baptised, newly married, etc. Where appropriate, groups may want to participate in some way in the services.

### **Ensure that church has links with groups and initiatives in the parish**

We suspect that it is probably true that the majority of parish organisations have church members among them. We felt it would be beneficial to collate a list of such members, so that we can have a channel of communication between the church and the groups, and respond to their needs in appropriate ways.

### **A practical guide for new members**

We are very conscious that many people coming into a church have little idea about what happens or why, and may be put off if they feel confused or conspicuous. We would therefore like to provide some simple way to help adults understand the environment they are coming in to.

We have produced a number such documents in the past, and it may be that what is required is an editing and representation of what is already available.

### **Include young people of the church family in church organisation**

Retaining children and young people has become a major concern of the church nationally. Without a group aimed at them, it is hard to know how best to make them feel involved. A suggestion which came from a family was to give young a share in the adult roles in the church, such as welcoming, readings, prayers.

### **Advertise church events in the parish**

Communication remains a perennial problem for any organisation. Many community events are carefully planned, but meet with little support only because too many people are unaware that they are happening. While word of mouth probably remains the best form of advertising in a rural area, we could probably do better with publicising what is happening.

One suggestion is to find a member of the church who is willing to take on the role of "Communications Manager", to keep abreast with what is happening, and to make sure that the best channels are being used to get things noticed.

### **Annual letter to church members**

Every year the planned giving organiser writes to all members of the PG scheme to thank them for their support. It would seem that this would be a good opportunity to show them where their giving has helped the church to continue its activities. Although this is done in some detail in the Annual Report, which goes to everyone on the electoral roll, we doubt whether many people wade through it, and a digest sent as a more personal letter might be more attractive.

### **Ongoing calendar of social events**

Social events are popular and also a very important part of our life as a church. If we consider ourselves to be a family, we need to be doing the sort of things that families do (eating together, watching films, having outings, etc).

A group of people will need to get together to plan a programme, and (with the help of the Communications Manager?) make sure that everyone knows what is to happen.

### **Consider whether our present pattern of worship is ideal**

We have a good balance of styles of worship through the month, but some of our services are very poorly attended. We intend to conduct a survey among the members to help determine whether the present timetable is making the best use of our resources of buildings, time and talents. This will be done through a questionnaire.

## ***Long-term targets***

### **Parenting course**

Some interest was expressed in providing a parenting course, and it was agreed that many parents might appreciate such a course, if it is offered in an acceptable way, and well run. We recognise that it would need to be of a very high standard, since many issues of accountability would be raised. We are aware that there are courses available with a Christian perspective, and would need to investigate these, perhaps with advice from the diocese or the Family Support team.

We would also need to establish whether there would in fact be any take-up locally. A possible way to do this might be to devise a test survey to be conducted among the parents of playgroup and Sunbeams children.

This will require further thought and research.

### **Offer pastoral support for people of parish**

While it is hoped that most people in the parish know that the Vicar is available to offer support in times of difficulty, and the pastoral team has a concern for church members, we are sure that there are many parishioners who face problems alone when help may be available.

We are a little uncertain how we can, without prying or breaching confidentiality, find out what needs are in the community and whether there is anything we can do to help.

It may be that the first step may be to establish a church presence in the Hub, to listen out for the issues that arise. Also we could conduct discussions with community-based organisations (e.g. Age Concern, Stroke Society, Hospice) to see if they would value our involvement.

### **Enquirers' course**

We have run Alpha courses in the past, but they have tended to attract mostly regular church members, and the last couple have been very poorly attended.

We shall research into alternative ways to invite the curious to discuss and learn about the faith in relaxed ways and comfortable environments.

### **Holiday Club**

It is some years since we ran a holiday club for the parish. Although much enjoyed by the children who took part, it was exhausting for the leaders and produced little in terms of children expressing an interest in aspects of faith (we appreciate that it is about sowing seeds that may not show signs of germination for years, but leaders still need the encouragement of seeing some sort of results).

However if possible we should like to attempt to run a club during the summer of 2011. This will need to be planned during the autumn of this year.

# ***Appendix 1***

## **Results from Post-it notes**

### ***Attending to God***

Learning opportunities to think, discuss, meditate, disagree in depth. A retreat whether local or up a mountain

From the reading in the morning — are we sure some people are not seen as more important? Do we welcome everyone?

All of us problems, difficulties with life & faith at times. Does the network of pastoral visitors fulfil this role of listening, helping or do we need more?

Time for ministering to people (praying with)

### ***Commending God's love to the world***

Outreach to the local schools, parents, children & carers

Many churches offer parenting courses. This is a very worthwhile idea. There are M. U. links who come & deliver the course. We would need to provide a venue, meet & greet & give encouragement to attend. It is not just a Christian thing.

Check & clarify what people know as skills, talents, experiences. How can they offer them & use them to benefit the community & grow themselves?

God loves all his children. We can spread his love by being loving friends & neighbours in the community & by being ourselves.

A (one-off) youth service? (seek ideas from youth club - build connections)

There are many initiatives in the parish, to discover what people want & ways of helping via the Hub, Action Plan, WCA etc. I think we need to link closely with these & see if we can offer any practical help for the different age groups & ideas.

### ***Not sure where to put it***

De-clutter our lives, not just of things but of attitudes & prejudices

Practical guide for new parishioners, with what the rules are i.e. 9.30 service 'collection/offering' how do you give to Parish funds as no specific collection.

In the hall I was looking at the wooden floor and noticed all the planks went in the same direction, we should all work together to achieve the same goal.

What youth work goes on in the church? Why is there no provision for child activities during the services?

### ***Building the Christian Community***

I see a house on a rock. Storms, hurricanes all sorts of weather try to destroy this building but it still stands on this solid rock.

Maybe a presence at the Hub

Evan said it today in his sermon which so often seems to contain a relevant message for me. Perhaps we should start with crumbs, many people want a smile, friendship — that could be a start

There is outreach to Hollington which is much appreciated. Are there similar needs within Westfield?

Closer links with guides & scouts

Quarterly church services involving guides, scouts, brownies etc may get more young people into church.  
After baptisms invite to a meeting with other people who have just been to baptise their children & lead on!

Dancing event. Invite children + parents to service & event.

Some sort of Garden Project run by Christians with outreach in mind.

Puppets in church.

Leaflet advertising 'church events' distribution to houses along Stonestile Lane (some farms with families non-church attenders)

Interfaith barbeque firework display

An annual letter to members telling them about the things that have happened — like an annual report but more personal.

When thinking about encouraging people into the church I think we ought to chat to all those who have joined in the last couple of years & see if we can learn anything from their stories.

Alpha type of equivalent courses for folk to discuss in informal environment.

A church directory of members.

Advertise 'Sunday School' in church hall

Barn dances, youth events, quiz nights, involving local & wider community

Some sort of course prior to marriage or baptism in the church

Baptism or church events involving rare visits = follow up call or invitation to community church events.

The combined service for Sena & Jane was very good. Could this be a more regular event?

We have a ¾ size proper snooker table and feel that it could be used in Westfield. Possibly set up a snooker club. (LW) Take young people on coach outings to begin with & then invite to an event at church, just get to know them first.

Take the young people & a family member on a holiday week to Scotland Christian Retreat Centre

Get acquainted with our community at the village hall doing various things, street parties, tea & entertainment, music, sing-songs etc.

## Appendix 2

Short Term Targets & Success Criteria	Actions	Lead People	Resources	Review Date & Reviewers	Evaluation of Progress
To provide opportunities for discussion & meditation.	Lent groups  Single sessions eg Discussion of The Shack  Study group	Evan  Sue S  Irene / Margaret E	Study + leader(s) Venue  Leader Venue  studies + leaders Venues	June 2010  Mission Action Group	
Develop the role of the Pastoral group	Training session	Evan Pastoral visitors	Diocesan rep	September 2010  Evan + CWs	
To use some Family service weeks to reach village groups	Take to family service planning group to plan services for the next year to include identified groups Sports groups WI WCA Youth Group Uniformed youth Bereaved Newly baptised Etc Approach groups targeted to engage in part of the service	Family Service Planning group          Evan/ service lead	Resources for service ideas  Puppet group for youth service	December 2010  PCC	
Ensure that the church has links with the varied groups and initiatives within the village	Collate list of groups and church members attached to them. To approach people to be the church eyes, ears & voice in those groups	Evan	Willing volunteers	September 2010  Mission Action group	
To produce a practical guide for new members	To collate information regarding church activities and routines	Bryn & Marian	Existing information	March 2010 Mission Action group	
To include the young people of the church family in church organisation	Recruit young people as sidesmen, readers etc	Dawn / Sue F	Sidesmen rota 9.30 material Adult supporters	March 2010  Mission Action group	
To advertise church events to the village	To recruit a Communications Manager To advertise events for the church in a methodical, long term way	Evan	Weekly notices to advertise in	March 2010  Mission Action group	

<b>Short term Targets &amp; success criteria</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Lead People</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Review Date &amp; Reviewers</b>	<b>Evaluation of Progress</b>
To produce an annual letter to church members to give information about the events for the year past	Time to produce the report, copy for members on the electoral role.	Evan	Reports from the AGM Volunteers to deliver the letter.	June 2010 PCC	
To ensure an ongoing calendar of social events for church members for fellowship	Lead people to meet and prepare calendar  Advertise events	Margaret M, Marian, Dawn, Sue S, Sue F	Dependent on events	December 2010  Mission Action Group	
To obtain views of church members regarding present service options	Questionnaire to be given to church members	Evan	Questionnaire	March 2010  PCC	

<b>Long term Targets &amp; Success Criteria</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Lead People</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Review Date &amp; Reviewers</b>	<b>Evaluation of Progress</b>
To investigate the need for parenting course within the village, and provide if there is a positive response.	Research courses available Devise questionnaire Ask playgroup permission to use them as a means of distributing questionnaire	Dawn / Sue  ? ?	Course Course leader Participants Venue Financial support	1 <sup>st</sup> Action Next meeting  Mission Action Group	
To investigate the need for support for people in Westfield	Find contacts in the community who may identify a need May be possible to get information from a presence at the Hub, Age Concern, Friendship club, health visitor	Church member to attend the Hub Bryn	Not known until need is identified	June 2010  Mission Action Group	
To provide an Alpha type course for discussion in an informal environment	To find a course that is appropriate to the parish of Westfield	Mission Action Group	Course material	June 2010  Evan	
To provide a holiday club for KS 2 children for 1 week during the summer holiday in 2011	To source a programme  To identify leaders and helpers	Mission Action Group	Not known	June 2010  Evan	