

A few words from the Vicar

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:19-20

Last month members of the Church Council spent a pleasant Saturday gathered together at St John’s Bircle. This wasn’t meant to be a ‘jolly’, although we did have lots of fun together and the day itself was a mixture of work and worship, all conducted in a spirit of Christian fellowship.



We had a good lunch too!

The overall objective of the ‘awayday’ was to discern, as best we could, where God might be leading Christ Church over the next few years. Did we succeed? Well, of course, only time will tell and I don’t think any of us has the arrogance to claim perfect knowledge of the Almighty’s will for our Church. I must admit though, as the day progressed, I felt a distinct sense of the Holy Spirit’s presence and for me, presiding at Holy Communion at the end of the day was electric.

We began the discernment process with Morning Prayer. This was important because, without setting the day’s activities upon the firm foundation of prayer, we would have been building a house upon the sand of our own wishful thinking.

Our focus throughout the day was very much upon discerning what we ought to do over the next few years to enable us to become better witnesses to God’s love and to enable us to grow; both numerically and spiritually.

As a worshipping community Christ Church has been witnessing faithfully to God’s love in this place for generations and there is much to affirm about our Church. Indeed, since coming to Ainsworth I have found Christ Church to be a warm, welcoming fellowship, full of the love of Jesus. It seems to me that much of the spiritual and physical framework needed for growth is already in place. Therefore, rightly, the emphasis on the day was very much about building upon the firm foundation that already exists rather than throwing six and starting again.

With this in mind, one of the things we did was to slightly modify and join together our two existing vision statements (don’t ask me how we came to have two!) and make a more explicit reference to our faith in Jesus. Our new vision statement is therefore:

‘Celebrating, encouraging, proclaiming and supporting faith, hope and love in Jesus Christ our Lord...

... by helping people to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and their neighbour as themselves.’

So, following on from this, what are we seeking to do? Well, *in addition to those things we are already doing*, the Church Council has identified a few areas where we need to focus our attention. For example:

- When I joined Christ Church last October I made some changes to our approach to baptisms, and to a lesser extent weddings and funerals. I did this in order to improve our relationship with those from the community who come to us for these important events. We need to continue in that direction.
- We need to continue to make the 10:30 am service more 'user friendly' for those with young families and continue to become more child friendly.
- We need to involve our young people more, consult with them about their spiritual needs and then do something about it.
- We need to grow our links with the Bradley Fold area of the parish, including the possibility of organising worship at a suitable venue in that area.
- We need to build the capacity for growth by improving our financial position and by identifying and encouraging those from amongst the congregation who might be led by God into a new area of ministry, whether lay or ordained.

I'm determined that our vision (and the objectives that arise from it) won't be put on a shelf to gather dust. So, watch this space!

Dave