



Transforming our Community – Equipping All Saints

***A Vision to see the Kingdom
of God come in power in
Swanage***

October 2016

***'Unless the Lord builds the house the
builders labour in vain' - Psalm 127.1***

*'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.'*¹

Introduction from the vicar

This was the passage that I chose to speak on for my very first sermon at All Saints nearly six years ago. It is still the vision that fires everything I do and say as a minister in God's Church. To see the Church in our day of one mind and heart, empowered by the Holy Spirit, experiencing signs and wonders daily, generous to those in need and seeing people coming to salvation daily – we're not there yet but it is the vision of such a Church here in our town that gets me up in the morning and energises everything I do.

Over the last five years the Lord has taken us on an amazing journey. Of course there's still a long way to go. Paul the Apostle knew he would never quite get there² - neither will we.

But the focus has shifted. When we went through a vision planning process five years ago we were looking at what we hoped God would do in our own fellowship - tasks to be done and goals to be achieved amongst us in All Saints. But the Lord has been showing us that we must now lift our eyes beyond the walls of our building (and the boundaries of our fellowship) to go out into his world with the love of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. To allow the Holy Spirit to transform us so that, as transformed people, we can move out into the world as Jesus' agents of transformation.

And that means that this new Vision document is as much about the people that we will become as about the things we will do. Many of the analogies that Jesus uses for his people and his Kingdom are transformative – salt, light, mustard seed, soils, yeast, wheat. Just our being out there in his world is powerful and effective. But Jesus also makes clear that we can be ineffective for the Kingdom if we don't get it right.

The western world has become used to the Church being locked into an inexorable cycle of genteel decline. But when we read the Bible and look at Church history we can see that it doesn't have to be that way. I truly believe that the Lord has something extraordinary prepared for us in Swanage. And he is going to do it through his 'ordinary' people empowered by his extraordinary Holy Spirit.

¹ Acts 2.42-47

² *'Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me'* – Philippians 3.12 (the passage I chose to be read at my induction on 2 November 2010).

In particular this Vision talks about All Saints becoming more 'intentionally missional'. Of course many of our fellowship are already living out the Kingdom of God in their daily lives very effectively, through their jobs, pastimes and community involvement, being Jesus to the people they meet day by day. As much as anything this Vision document is designed to ensure that the Body of Christ at All Saints supports and equips them in this – and doesn't get in the way of what God is already doing.

And of course All Saints is just a small part of a much bigger picture in Swanage and beyond. Our aim as a Diocese is '*Renewing Hope – Pray, Serve and Grow*'. What follows is a picture of how this aim might be lived out in this part of the Body of Christ.

Let's look forward to the next five years together...

'In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory'.³

Why do we need a new vision strategy for All Saints?

When Andrew was interviewed for the post of Vicar of All Saints in July 2010 he was asked where All Saints would be in five years time. His reply was that we would have put together a vision strategy for the first five years, worked through it and then be preparing an updated strategy for the next five years.

So in November 2011 we published a vision strategy for our fellowship. It was called *"Becoming - Larger - Younger - Deeper - Stronger - Wider by Loving, Learning and Serving Together"*. Five years have passed and we believe that this is the moment to reflect on where we have come from, where we are now and, most importantly, where the Lord is leading us in the future.

Much of what follows emerges from our experience of the last five years together. This culminated in Andrew's sabbatical in the Autumn of 2015 when he visited fellowships where the Spirit of God was clearly working and galvanising them to become intentionally missional to their communities⁴. God has also spoken through a number of key prophetic words. Finally we held a consultation morning in January 2016 involving key members of our fellowship. This vision strategy is the fruit of all of this.

Where have we come from?

Please re-read the 2011 strategy⁵. It details the heritage of All Saints (which of course was 100 years old in 2015). It explains how the world is changing and how the Church therefore also must change to reach people for Christ. In particular we can no longer rely on people just turning up at church as has happened in the past – our mission is to reach out to them.

The 2011 strategy also described who we are – a medium-size church, of above average age, evangelical, biblical, Spirit filled, Anglican and ecumenical. Natural Church Development (NCD) also analysed the state of our fellowship and found it to be a "healthy church". The latest NCD analysis demonstrates that we have grown even healthier⁶.

The 2011 strategy also looked at our five core objectives (to become *Larger - Younger - Deeper - Stronger - Wider*) and grouped together a series of initiatives under each of those headings. The overall objective was to see an Acts 2 church here in Swanage reflecting the priorities and emphases of the Early Church found in Acts 2.42-47. That is still our aim. The question is how do we move forward from here?

³ Ephesians 1.11-12

⁴ Andrew visited 10 different fellowships in the UK and Uganda and spoke to 35 different church leaders.

⁵ You can find a copy on the website at allsaints-swanage.org/Vision-strategy-2011.aspx

⁶ The overall score for All Saints in 2016 was 62.5 (up 13.8 from our score in 2011 of 48.7).

Where are we now?

Looking at the 2011 vision strategy, we have not of course done everything that we set out to. However the Lord has enabled us to achieve a considerable amount of what we aimed to do five years ago. Briefly

Larger – our fellowship has grown. A number of people have become Christians, and others have joined us as they moved to the town or decided that the Lord wanted them to join All Saints from other fellowships.

Younger – average age back in 2011 was 60. Since then we have been as low as 52 (in 2013). The average age has crept up a little to 55 but we are certainly younger than we were (despite the fact that we all grow a year older every 12 months!). A key change has been the establishment of *Breakfast@9* which has been a very effective means of reaching people with young children who might otherwise not be at church.

Deeper – many would testify to the fact that their relationship with the Lord has deepened over the last five years. In particular the prayer life of our church has grown remarkably since we appointed Anne and Pauline to head up the Prayer and Prophetic Team. We have also held a number of town wide prayer initiatives (24/7 prayer, 'If My People' prayer nights etc).

Stronger – loving relationships was always a key strength of all Saints. This has continued to show up as a key strength in all the NCD surveys is that we have done since 2011. The work of the Pastoral Team led by Ted, Andrea and Carole, together with the work of the home group leaders, has been essential in this.

Wider – in the last five years we have sought to take the Gospel out onto the streets, with three very successful Community Café-and-Carwashes, three equally successful Fundays and open-air Carnival and carol services. We also have held a number of Alpha courses through which people have come to Christ, some of whom have become members of our fellowship. Members of All Saints have got involved with *Fresh Prospects*, *Open the Book* and *Link Visiting* and the Sunday Club at Purbeck View School bringing an expression of church to the students there, as well as our continued involvement in the *Food Bank*, *Besom* and *Communicare*. In addition we have continued to tithe ten per cent of our income to mission, with mission partnerships established with a number of different missions and individuals serving overseas and we pray for them regularly in our "Mission of the month" prayer times on Sunday mornings.

*'By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.'*⁷

But God has moved on in the last 5 years

Our context has continued to evolve as the Holy Spirit has moved. Let's look at what God has done and said in the last 5 years for the Whole Church in Swanage.

The prophetic background

Amos 3.7 says that *"Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets"*. And God has spoken prophetically over the last few years at a number of key points.

In August 2008 he gave a number of dreams and visions to Dave Brock of Emmanuel Baptist Church. The pictures were of a huge wave of God's Spirit approaching the town from the sea. A number of God's people were riding the wave on surfboards, holding hands together. As the wave swept onto the beach and into the town, others who had been praying on the beach joined them and the wave swept up the Isle of Purbeck into the rest of England.

Then in July 2014 four members of All Saints attended a prophetic conference in Kent. They went forward together and a lady (who did not know who they were or where they were from) gave a prophetic word: *"I see a rock and it's got a hole going right through it. If I look through the rock I can see the sea. I believe God is saying you're nearly there - the hole's getting larger"*.

Then she said, *"I can see a beach community. I believe God is saying that the methods that you would use in a town or a city won't work for a beach community. You need to seek God for creative ideas to reach out to your community."*

Finally in January 2016 the Lord spoke to us about shaking. *"There are two sorts of shaking in my Word. The first is to shake what can be shaken to bring down strongholds, to shake those who believe they are strong to show that they are weak. But there is another sort of shaking - where the trees are shaken and from them pours forth fruit⁸. I want to shake you to enable you to be fruitful. This is not the shaking of people who believe they are strong but turn out to be weak. It is the shaking of people who know they are weak but, through the shaking, are fruitful. Let me shake you all - your lives with me, your ministries, your treasured occupations and positions. Be prepared to let me shake you. And as I shake you watch the fruit drop from your branches."*

The shaking began only a couple of days after that word was given. Then we began our Spring Alpha courses which attracted up to 60 people.

⁷ Exodus 13.21

⁸ See Isaiah 17.6 - *"Yet some gleanings will remain, as when an olive tree is beaten, leaving two or three olives on the topmost branches, four or five on the fruitful boughs," declares the Lord, the God of Israel.*"

So prophetically the Lord seems to be saying

- a major move of the Holy Spirit is coming which seems to involve the whole Church in Swanage moving together (like surfers joining hands to ride the wave of God's Spirit)
- we are getting closer but we need to seek God for creative ideas to reach out effectively to our community
- this move of God will involve shaking – it won't necessarily be pleasant but it will be fruitful

What God has been doing in his Church in Swanage

A key element of where we are as a fellowship flows out of our relationships with the rest of the Church in Swanage. In the last five years the Lord has brought the whole Church in Swanage together so that it has grown more united than ever before. All of the really worthwhile things that we do as Church outside of our buildings we do as *Churches Together*. This includes supporting initiatives such as *Link Visiting*, *Communaire*, *Besom* and *Fresh Prospects* together with worship events such as Good Friday services, Pentecost Praise, *Purbeck Evening Praise*, the *Songs of Praise* service in the summer and the Open Air carol service. We have been praying together much more with days and weeks of 24-hour prayer and the *If My People* prayer meetings. Since the beginning of 2016 there have also been some encouraging signs of a closer relationship between All Saints and the other Anglican churches in the Swanage & Studland Team. So this Vision document is only a part of the Anglican Team's response to the Diocesan aim to 'Pray, Serve & Grow'. We are looking forward to working with the person God will appoint as the new team rector in 2017 as together we seek to reach our town with the Gospel.

Above all this there is *The Wave*, which has been a remarkable move of the Spirit of God drawing his people together to serve the young people of our town. The way that God has moved in the Wave has been little short of miraculous. The number of young people being reached has increased by factor of three or four and there is huge dynamism and optimism about the project. And young people have begun to give their lives to Christ.

So what the Spirit of God has been doing is to encourage us to reach out into the community and to do so as part of the whole Church in Swanage. What are the implications for us at All Saints?

*'And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'*⁹

The Lord will build his Church

The last vision strategy very much focused on building up the Body of Christ at All Saints. However, God is doing a new thing¹⁰ – he is drawing his people in Swanage together as One Church. That does not mean that people will not continue to worship in different settings. But it does mean that we also must keep paying attention to what God wants us to do **together**.

It also means that we get clear on what is God's part and what is our part. Jesus makes clear that **he** will build his church. The Apostle Paul also makes clear that it is God, not us, who gives growth to the church¹¹. Our job is not to build the Church or to seek to grow it ourselves – the Lord will do that.

So if we are not to build the Church what should we be aiming to do?

The Church is called to proclaim the Kingdom

In the last few years the Lord has been speaking to us more and more about the Kingdom of God.

From the start of his ministry the Kingdom was Jesus' passion. His first message was, *"The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*¹²

For Jesus the Kingdom meant the rule or reign of God had come in people's lives¹³ and the only right response was to repent– to change their way of thinking and actions 180 degrees (the true meaning of repentance). For Jesus this meant preaching the good news and proclaiming freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, release of the oppressed and the year of the Lord's favour¹⁴.

And once he had proclaimed the Kingdom himself he taught his disciples to do so as well¹⁵. He trained his first Twelve Apostles and then sent them out in preparation for the time when they would be ministering without him being physically present.

Finally before his final departure for glory he gave them an apostolic mission - *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make*

⁹ Matthew 16.18

¹⁰ Our 'verse of the year' at All Saints for 2016 - Isaiah 43.18-19 – *"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."*

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 3.6 – *'I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.'*

¹² Mark 1.15

¹³ Psalm 145.13 – *'Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations.'*

¹⁴ Luke 4.18-19

¹⁵ Matthew 10.7-8 – *'As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.'*

*disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*¹⁶

What is an apostolic mission?

To be an apostle in New Testament times meant three things

- an apostle had to go – apostle means ‘messenger’ or ‘envoy’ – you can’t be an apostle if you don’t go anywhere
- an apostle went with delegated authority and power
- an apostle aimed to transform the culture of the place he was going to.

The Early Church had been trained for their apostolic mission and they carried it out, taking the Gospel to the whole of the known world. But the Great Commission was not intended to be confined to the Early Church.

Our apostolic task

If we are to fulfill the Great Commission in our day we are to do likewise

- We must ‘Go’ - if we are to become Christ’s apostles to his world we have to go to it – staying within the walls of our church buildings is not an option.
- We go with Jesus’ authority - Jesus said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...”*
- We go in the power of his Holy Spirit – *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”*¹⁷ – including Swanage! If we are not first transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit then we have no business going anywhere!
- Like the Early Church we face a culture which is increasingly hostile to the Gospel. Our task is to see it transformed in the power of the Holy Spirit. That will only happen completely when Jesus returns. But we can begin right now.

Being ‘intentionally missional’

Above all we should be ‘intentionally missional’ in all that we do. That means that every aspect of our ministry should be seeking to fulfill Christ’s commission to *‘Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations’*. It doesn’t mean that everything we do needs to be specifically evangelistic, but that everything we do has an outward focus, either seeking to ‘Go’ ourselves or equipping and supporting those who do. It also doesn’t mean that we ignore our pastoral care for one another. On the whole we do that brilliantly already – but our pastoral care must be balanced with an outward focus.

If we aren’t looking outwards, we’re looking in the wrong place!

¹⁶ Matthew 28.18-20 – often known as the ‘Great Commission’.

¹⁷ Acts 1.8

Restating our Vision Statement for church and for All Saints

One of the key lessons that Andrew learned through his sabbatical last year was the importance of being able to sum up the vision of a fellowship in a memorable way, encapsulating what it was aiming to do.

Our 2011 Vision Statement focussed on what we would do as a fellowship (become '*Larger – Younger*' etc). But at the beginning of 2016 the All Saints Committee resolved to adopt a new Vision Statement -

'To see the Kingdom of God come in power through the transformation of our community'.

Of course this is something which can and should be said about the Church as a whole.

The second part of our new vision statement specifically involves our own fellowship. The particular task of All Saints is

'To equip God's people at All Saints so that each person becomes an agent of that transformation'

What does this transformation mean in practice – and how are each of us involved?

A transformed community

The Early Church radically changed the culture of the world around it, rather than being absorbed by it. Soon after Pentecost the first apostles were healing the sick, preaching faith in Jesus, challenging the religious establishment and reaching out to groups (like Samaritans and Gentiles) who previously had been excluded from the Covenant. They turned the world upside down¹⁸ so that within 300 years Christianity had become the dominant faith of the most powerful empire in the world despite facing a deeply hostile culture.

What would transformation of our community look like in 2016?

More and more the wider Church is talking about community transformation. There are many contemporary examples to draw on of churches that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, are beginning to engage with their communities and are seeing lives transformed. Check out

- **Causeway Coast Vineyard Northern Ireland** - they have seen thousands of people come to Christ over the past few years. To quote their website¹⁹, "*We are a church where lives are changing. A place where people are saying 'yes' to God and experiencing life in a fresh way. We are a people who bring life to every*

¹⁸ Acts 17.6 (RSV) – "*And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brethren before the city authorities, crying, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also..."*"

¹⁹ www.causewaycoastvineyard.com/

area in our community. A place where we see transformation happen as we pursue the dreams that God has placed in our hearts."

- **Reading** – for 20 years church leaders in Reading Christian Network have committed themselves to meet together once a week and pray for their city. Their vision²⁰ is *"to see the communities of Reading transformed by the life, love and power of Jesus Christ.... We want to see transformation in ALL of our communities - local areas, different age groups, diverse people-groups, and every sphere of activity in which God's people live out their lives impacted with the Good News of Jesus. This begins with personal transformation as we encounter the living God in our own lives, and overflows to affect the whole created order, bringing blessing to every area of life.... The signs are good. After [many] years of praying and serving together, we have seen crime levels drop, Reading has been reported as being a town with a growing number of employment opportunities and is one of the most popular towns for overseas investment. We anticipate further signs of transformation across the Reading area".* The June edition of *Christian Today* reported that earlier this year the churches of Reading got together for a programme of street evangelism where 1200 people committed their lives to Christ ²¹.
- **Leicester** – Holy Trinity Leicester is a church whose vision is to *"be a community of missional disciples who will transform the city of Leicester and beyond with the Gospel of Jesus Christ".* They do this through *Mission-Shaped Communities* which meet out in various parts of the city, building relationships and sharing life with those they're seeking to reach (check out their website²²).

Of course these fellowships are not all success and achievement - there are times when life is messy for God's people and the Gospel speaks into these situations for us to respond to the Lord and come through. Often broken people are most easily able to receive from those who themselves know what it is to be broken.

But there is a recurring pattern. Individual Christians encountering God in the power of the Holy Spirit, transformed and then propelled out into their communities where the Lord uses them to transform the lives of others. It is the pattern that we read about in Acts repeated in the 21st Century.

At our vision day in January we talked about what transformation of our own community in Swanage might look like. Of course God is already at work in our community – and not only through Christians. Our task is to recognise where God is at work and join in. These are some of the ideas we came up with

- *less crime*
- *fuller employment*
- *businesses prospering*
- *fewer homeless people*
- *less ill health*
- *people more open to salvation*
- *the community more accepting of visitors*
- *more honour and respect*
- *'an open heaven'*
- *an expectancy of God to do something*

²⁰ www.readingchristiannetwork.com/our-vision.html

²¹ www.christiantoday.com/article/revival.in.reading.1200.people.turn.to.christ.in.just.3.weeks/89070.htm

²² s339932724.websitehome.co.uk/newcomers.html

- *a community church - more Christians witnessing to our community*
- *not an instantaneous change, of course, but rather a realisation – a gradual dawning that the Spirit of God is working - take what happens in a small family when God begins to transform it and think what this might be like on a community scale - it becomes infectious - people are drawn in and become inquisitive.*
- *a recognition that people of the churches don't just stay in their ivory towers detached from reality or lead two separate lives, a Sunday one and a weekday one, but have a genuine desire to serve in their communities while holding on and acting on to what they believe*
- *the real thing, the genuine article*

*'And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.'*²³

Before the community is transformed the Church must first be transformed

It is tempting to think about community transformation being accomplished by social action, or renewal programmes. That wasn't Jesus' way. His instructions were clear

- go
- in his authority
- in the power of his Holy Spirit
- to proclaim the Kingdom
- teach his teaching
- make disciples
- then baptise them

His disciples turned the world upside down. But this was not accomplished with the aid of programmes – it was done by God's people themselves first being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and then going on to see the lives of others transformed.

The same is just as true today – a group of people that want to see the community transformed must first be transformed themselves by the power of the Holy Spirit. This means cultivating amongst God's people at All Saints

- a personal experience of being 'born again'²⁴
- and of being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit²⁵
- a deep inner walk with the Lord, worshipping and feeding on Christ²⁶
- being taught, disciplined and encouraged to walk into all that the Lord is calling us into²⁷
- operating in our God-given gifts and ministry²⁸
- powerfully equipped as we go out into the world to bring the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus²⁹

²³ 2 Corinthians 3.18

²⁴ John 3.5 – *'Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit."*

²⁵ Luke 24.49 – *'I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'*

²⁶ John 15.5 – *'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'*

²⁷ Colossians 2.6-7 – *'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.'*

²⁸ Romans 12.6-8 – *'We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.'*

²⁹ Acts 1.8 – *'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'*

This does not mean that there is no place for church programmes. But first and foremost our focus should be personal transformation and equipping by the Lord for what he wants to do through us. If we focus on these things then, like the early disciples of Jesus who were baptised in the Spirit, we too will spill out on to the streets and the transformation we long to see will start to happen by the Spirit's power.

What does this mean in practice?

Let's take those points in turn.

A personal experience of being 'born again'

In a postmodern world with vague distinctions between right and wrong, the temptation is to water down what the Gospel requires. In fact Jesus is very clear that his followers must make a clear response to him and that response is to repent. Peter says the same thing on the Day of Pentecost.³⁰ The result is new birth.

So our aim must continue to be for people to hear the good news biblically proclaimed and respond to it in faith. Our lives should change as a result³¹. It will be a process and probably not an overnight process, but we should be renewed and transformed people as a result, notably different from the world around us.³²

Filled and transformed by the Holy Spirit

The Acts of the Apostles are really the Acts of the Holy Spirit. The early followers of Jesus were propelled out into their communities by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We will not see our community transformed unless we too are empowered by him. To quote one of the contributors to the January vision morning, **"When the Holy Spirit sets us on fire we will not be able to stop telling people the good news, as in Acts chapter 4"**.

At a personal level this means

- being filled with the Holy Spirit day by day – so that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not just a one off event but a dynamic daily experience
- allowing him to work deeply in our lives in healing us physically and bringing inner healing to those areas damaged by sin and previous experience
- this will require that we develop a ministry of inner healing so that those damaged by sin and previous experiences can be healed, restored and empowered – this is a priority now to enable us to move forward.

³⁰ He tells the crowd, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2.38).

³¹ 2 Corinthians 5.17 – 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: The old has gone, the new has come!'

³² Romans 12.2 – 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.'

At a corporate level this means

- making space for the Holy Spirit in our worship. As a fellowship we will keep aiming for the Holy Spirit to have complete freedom to move in our midst and for the full range of His gifts – especially spoken gifts (words of knowledge/wisdom, prophecy, tongues and interpretation) - to be used amongst us. But in an orderly way that honours the Lord and does not alienate those we are trying to attract to Jesus. We have made progress in the last five years but we must to press on further.
- ensuring that we continue to reflect the fruit of the Spirit³³ as we exercise spiritual gifts. If we do not show how the Holy Spirit impacts and refines our character individually and as a fellowship, we are in danger of simply being '*noisy gongs or clanging cymbals*'.³⁴
- to ask the Lord to increase the numbers being healed and converted through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- to encourage many more people to seek ministry at services especially for healing - and to ask the Lord to raise up more people with particular gifts of healing.
- to understand that healing takes time – it involves ministering to deep inner needs and setting people free from all that has been holding them back. We need more teaching on healing, if appropriate by gifted outside speakers coming to teach and envision us.
- committing ourselves to work with the rest of God's Church in Swanage in setting up a 'Healing Rooms' or a similar initiative – this will involve identifying someone who is called and gifted by God in healing to head up this ministry.

Teaching what Jesus commanded

Jesus is very clear that we are to teach everything that he commanded³⁵. For Jesus the authority of God's Word in the Bible was paramount³⁶ so our teaching needs to line up with the Bible. Not all churches which focus on the Bible grow – but it is difficult to find a church which is growing that is not focused on the Bible.

So although the world has continued to change in the last 5 years, Jesus hasn't³⁷ and we must remain firm to our Core Beliefs firmly based on the authority of the Word of God with our teaching thoroughly Bible based (our Core Beliefs are listed on the final page of this Strategy).

For that reason we are beginning our teaching programme in September 2016 with some sessions on the Bible so we all start from the same basic overview, moving on

³³ Galatians 5.23-23 – '*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*'

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 13.1

³⁵ Matthew 28.20

³⁶ Matthew 5.17-19 – '*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*'

³⁷ Hebrews 13.8

to spiritual gifts, prayer and how to share our faith. From October we will be beginning a Sunday series on the Cross.

But teaching is not just a matter of remaining biblical. Good teaching is a faith building experience – it lifts our vision for what God can do in our lives. One way to stretch our faith is to have teaching from outside speakers whose faith is greater than our own. In the next five years we will consciously to seek this, where possible gathering together the whole Church in Swanage or Purbeck.

A focus on Prayer

The Early Church was dedicated to prayer – just a glance at the New Testament shows that they had a culture of consistent and committed prayer³⁸. We will not see the Kingdom of God come in power or our community transformed unless we understand this and put it into practice in our own personal and corporate life. Hence 'Prayer' is one of the Five Marks of Membership for every committed member of All Saints (see the section on prayer that follows).

Tackling hard questions

Twenty First Century post-modern Britain is not a comfortable place to be a Christian. The temptation is to water down biblical truth to accommodate those who oppose it.

In fact Jesus' approach is a world away from the harsh condemnation of the religious establishment of the time. So he does not condemn the woman caught in adultery, though at the same time he tells her to 'Go and sin no more'.³⁹

But Jesus is very clear we should not be misleading people by false teaching – sin really is sin⁴⁰. Similarly Paul makes it clear that we should not adapt the message of the Gospel to make it more 'acceptable' to the world⁴¹.

So as part of equipping God's people at All Saints it is important to make space to tackle hard questions and defend biblical truth. This should include

- Continuing our occasional series 'Big Questions' dealing with Apologetics
- At the right time being prepared to set aside if necessary a morning or a day with an outside speaker to tackle big issues such as social Injustice, modern day slavery, poverty, healing, the care of our planet and its resources, and how to

³⁸ Acts 1.14 – *'They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.'*

³⁹ John 8.11

⁴⁰ Matthew 18.6-7 – *'If anyone causes one of these little ones - those who believe in me - to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!'*

⁴¹ Galatians 1.8-10 – *'But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: if anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.'*

respond to rising mental health issues in our young people. This must also include at some stage the topic of human sexuality, the most divisive issue facing the Church of England – and the worldwide Anglican communion – right now. On this particular issue we reaffirm the clear teaching of scripture, that the unchangeable standard of lifelong marriage between one man and one woman is the only proper place for sexual intimacy. At the same time we must be loving, pastorally sensitive and informed towards those struggling with these issues - and determined in the way we conduct ourselves that our fellowship will dwell together in unity – and that within the wider Church we *'make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace'*.⁴² That may not always be possible - but we need to try.

Making disciples

Jesus didn't ask us to make converts, or communicants or even church members, but disciples. The Greek word for disciple⁴³ means learner. We should all be encouraged to disciple one another together with an enhanced role for Branch (small group) leaders in this process (see page 28).

⁴² Ephesians 4.3

⁴³ μαθητής (mathétés)

'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...' ⁴⁴

Spreading the Good News

The New Testament is clear that we have a responsibility to bring the Good News to our community.⁴⁵

So it is vital to continue with a programme of active evangelism. We have had some very fruitful Alpha courses in the last few years. In the next 5 years

- We must continue with Alpha – but be aware of the need to walk with people through Alpha and then build them into 1-2-1 discipling and nurture groups.
- Continue with events such as the Carwash, the Funday, social events and special services at Easter, Christmas and other times to make connections with those who are not yet Christians.
- Seek the Lord for new ways to spread the Good News – the Lord has told us *"to seek God for creative ideas to reach out to [our] community"*. That is a responsibility of us all. However we can avoid a lot of wasted time and resources by asking the Lord exactly what he wants us to do (or stop doing).
- This requires us to identify the evangelists in our midst and bring them together in a reformed Evangelism & Community Outreach Team to seek the Lord as to the creative ways by which we can reach our community for Christ – and then carry those initiatives into action.
- Finally it is essential whenever possible to work with the other parts of the Church in Swanage – the Lord commands the blessing where brothers and sisters dwell in unity. ⁴⁶

Getting out into the community

Not everyone has the gift of evangelism. But we are all called to be salt and light in our community. But the chances of doing that are limited if we spend our whole time in church!

So we should

- encourage every member of All Saints to take up at least one activity, hobby, interest or occupation which brings them into regular contact with those outside of Church
- celebrate those of us who are in positions of responsibility and influence in the wider community, praying for them and acknowledging this as a valid and important expression of ministry in our town

⁴⁴ 1 Peter 3.15

⁴⁵ Romans 10.14 – *'How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?'*

⁴⁶ Psalm 133.1, 3b – *'How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity... For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life for evermore.'*

Hearing God's call for our lives

Each one of us has an individual call on our life. Our 2011 Vision Strategy has as three of its aims

- after 5 years for 2 people to have offered themselves for ordination training
- for one person from our congregation to go on full time mission
- for 2 people a year to go on short term mission trips

We have done well - we now have our own Licensed Lay Pioneer Minister in Lindy Cameron and one person has offered himself for ordination and a second for LLM training; plus a number have gone on short term mission trips. (We are still looking for our first 'home grown' missionary!)

One way to encourage vocations of all types is to teach it - we all have a call on our lives specific to us. Teaching courses like *Growing Leaders* (planned for 2017) encourages those who do not believe that they have a call to a distinctive ministry in God's Church to realise that they do have a call and identify it.

*'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.'*⁴⁷

Where do I fit? - Five Marks of Membership for All Saints

A key element of the healthy churches which Andrew visited during his sabbatical was that members knew what it meant to be a member of that fellowship. Whilst not every church member will do all these things all the time, they set a benchmark for who we are which will transform the culture of the fellowship.

The Five Marks of Membership which we have agreed on at All Saints are to

- worship regularly
- pray
- be part of a branch community (small group)
- serve on a team
- give financially

If we are to be intentionally missional (that is to say outward looking) in all that we do, and we want to find creative ways to reach our community, what might these Five Marks of Membership look like in practice?

Let's start to unpack what each of these might mean for us at All Saints over the next five years

⁴⁷ Colossians 2.6-7

*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire.'*⁴⁸

Our 1st Mark of Membership - Worship regularly

Worshipping together is essential because

- It is our primary calling as Christians⁴⁹ - we were created to worship
- We encounter God by his Spirit as we worship and so can be transformed by him
- We can receive teaching and be built up as Christians
- We meet with the Family of God - and families need to spend time worshipping together ('the family that prays together stays together')
- Sunday morning worship in particular is our 'shop window' - although increasingly we cannot expect non-Christians to come onto our 'territory', the fact is that visitors and newcomers do come along on a Sunday to check us out (and maybe check out God at the same time). So although Sunday worship takes place mainly in our building, we must bear in mind those visiting from other churches or who maybe have no faith at all. In particular prophecy in the context of a worship service can have a powerful effect on the casual visitor.⁵⁰

What will worship look like over the next five years? When we met in January we discussed worship in some detail. Different types of service work for different people. Taking the different services that we might provide on a Sunday

8am - Some enjoy a liturgical, robed service - so 8.00 should stay following the same pattern of teaching as at 10.30.

- But it would be helpful for those attending that service to play a fuller part in it. One way would be to encourage different people to take the intercessions.
- In addition we should explore whether the addition of one or two hymns every week rather than just once a month would make that service more attractive to outsiders and the present congregation.
- Finally the 8.00 service is above all an opportunity for quiet reflective worship. So we must consciously make time and space for the Holy Spirit to come in power in that service.

Breakfast@9 - this is working well and regularly attracts 40-60 people, a number of whom would not be in church at all if it were not for B@9. If we are looking for the most 'intentionally missional' service at All Saints this has to be B@9!

- The experience of other churches that do B@9 is that B@9ers cannot easily be expected to move onto other expressions of worship. They enjoy the B@9 format. However it is also important to help them engage more deeply with the Holy Spirit and the Bible than is usually possible on a Sunday morning. So we must work on encouraging them to engage more deeply with the Lord in other

⁴⁸ Hebrews 12.28-29

⁴⁹ *'Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever'* - Westminster Shorter Catechism 1647.

⁵⁰ As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14.24-25, *'But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, ²⁵ as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"'*

ways – in particular Alpha and joining a branch. It is very encouraging that about one third of the people going to Spring Harvest next year are 'B@9ers'.

- We should also focus on more active recruitment to B@9 from other places, especially Toddlers.
- 10.30** – the 10.30 service has changed significantly in the last few years. Our vision morning in January raised a number of issues which we need addressing over the next five years
- Welcome is vital – but we must keep ensuring that our welcomers are well trained. So we need to set up a regular briefing sessions for the welcome team. In addition the opportunity to welcome each other in the service is a key way of making sure that everyone is welcomed and no one slips through the net!
 - Refreshments are a great way to welcome people – we are now making tea, coffee and pastries available at the beginning of the service as well as the end.
 - Service format – the structured informality of our services should continue but to stop us getting stuck in a rut it would be good to change the format of the service occasionally to introduce more variety (without the service becoming too 'crowded').
 - Music – a perennial 'hot topic' – at our January vision morning most people seemed to think the mixture of contemporary and traditional hymns worked well.
 - We must keep working hard on the quality of our sung worship ⁵¹. Regular times for the whole worship team to worship together and become better equipped through attending worship conferences and events are a really good way for the team to keep building their skills and vision. In the next five years when opportunity permits we should aim to recruit a (paid) part time band worship leader.
 - Testimonies – we have been consciously making space for testimonies in our 10.30 service since the end of 2015. As the Lord transforms us and our community, we must share good news, building faith and giving people the opportunity to share what God is doing in our lives.
 - Space for the Holy Spirit – this is absolutely vital. Our 2011 plan aimed for spiritual gifts to be used regularly in our services. There has been a steady increase in the use of words and prophetic gifts and now occasionally the gift of tongues and interpretation. If we are to be biblical this must be encouraged further ⁵² but if we want to experience more of the work of the Holy Spirit we must make more space for him to operate. The regular moments of silence in the 10.30 service where we can consciously make space for the Holy Spirit are during the open worship time led by the band and immediately following the sermon. We need to be more conscious and deliberate about making time and space for the Holy Spirit to speak and act in our midst.
 - Prayer – if we want to see the transformation of our community, the times of corporate prayer are important moments for us to pray into what the Holy Spirit wants to do in our midst, in particular taking the opportunity corporately to bless our community and pray for its transformation as we pray together on a Sunday morning.
 - Sermons and teaching – people learn in different ways and so we must make sure that we communicate our message in different ways. More use of AV and visual aids is important for visual people. People disagree about sermon length. Attention spans are said to have reduced in recent years. But if we make sure

⁵¹ The latest NCD scores show that the fellowship's perception of the quality of our sung worship is going up year on year. But it still lags somewhat below our other scores and we need to look at what we can do to continue to 'raise our game' in this area.

⁵² 1 Corinthians 14.26

that the sermons are biblical, well delivered, guided by the Holy Spirit, varied in format and well presented, then we should keep people engaged.

- We have done two teaching series on worship in the last 5 years but the topic needs to be revisited regularly in our sermon slot – we are talking about our most important function as human beings.
- Service length – a number of people on the vision morning in January talked about service length. However very few people leave at the end of the service before coffee even if the service lasts past 12.00 noon. As a general rule, most people seem to feel that 11.45 is a good finish time to aim at.
- Taking worship outside of our buildings – this is very much a function of Churches Together in getting involved Carnival Praise, Holy Week events, Open Air Carols etc. But is the Lord also prompting some of us to go into care homes and other places where people are not able to come to church to lead worship there?

Evening services – many of us grew up in churches where the evening service was the high point of the week. However except for churches with a high proportion of students and youth, it seems harder to interest people in Sunday evening church.

There no point in meeting together on a Sunday evening for its own sake – there needs to be a distinctive purpose to our meeting together on a Sunday evening.

- **Purbeck Evening Praise** – has been going since 2012. It has a key role to play in bringing together God's people in the Isle of Purbeck. We should encourage each other to support it as a key part of our programme and raise its profile in our fellowship.
- **Tea@4** - Ted led this very successfully over a number of months in 2013-14. But after initial enthusiasm its support dropped off. We should work out other ways to engage the older members of our community with more traditional worship, maybe at other times during the week.
- **Times to wait on the Holy Spirit** – this is a key part of our worship which we won't have time for on a Sunday morning but which we must prioritise. How about occasional midweek prayer and worship times or turning *Sunday@6-30* into a monthly 'soaking' session to wait attentively in God's presence?

*'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.'*⁵³

Our 2nd Mark of Membership - Pray

The history of the Church – and our experience - teaches us that none of what we have described above will happen without believing prayer. Just as the Lord is calling us to 'raise our game' in the other aspects of our walk together, first and foremost he is calling us to lift our vision and expectations about prayer.

In particular Revival is always preceded by consistent heartfelt prayer and intercession.⁵⁴ And in the familiar verse at 2 Chronicles 7.14 the Lord says that *'if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land'*. So if we want to see Revival we have to hammer on the doors of heaven until the Lord answers!

There are a number of key ways to 'raise our game' in prayer

All Saints prayer meetings - There are 8 opportunities a week to pray in All Saints (at 8.15 weekdays and on Sunday at 10, Thursday at 8.45 and Saturday at 9). We should continue this pattern of regular weekly prayer and ask that everyone who is a committed member of All Saints endeavour to attend at least one of those meetings each month.

Swanage Church-wide prayer initiatives – we have held three Swanage wide prayer initiatives this year together with starting the bi-monthly 'If My People' prayer meetings. The most effective way to pray is in unity for there the Lord *'commands a blessing'*⁵⁵. We should continue to support Swanage wide initiatives and no other meetings should take place at All Saints which clash with these.

Quiet days – Margaret Williams led a very successful quiet day during Lent 2016. We should make this an annual event for the whole fellowship. The All Saints committee, team and branch leaders and the vicar's support team should likewise take a minimum of one quiet day away together every Autumn.

Prayer partners and triplets – a local gym recently sent out an email which said, *'You are far more likely to succeed with a friend'*. It's true – we should encourage as many as possible to be part of a prayer 'cell' (a triplet or pair). If you would like to be part of a prayer cell contact Anne Humpage or Pauline Boland (Prayer Team leaders) and they will link you up.

Sharing answers to prayer – even the Early Church sometimes found it difficult to believe that the Lord had answered their prayers⁵⁶. Let's get better at sharing answers to prayer especially on the Prayer Chain. It's amazing how encouraging it is to hear about answered prayer.

⁵³ 1 Thessalonians 5.16-18

⁵⁴ Eg the Hebrides Revival of 1949 was preceded by intercession by two elderly ladies praying in their cottage – see the account of Duncan Campbell at www.revival-ibrary.org/pensketches/revivals/hebrides.html

⁵⁵ Psalm 133.3b

⁵⁶ See Acts 12.15

Teaching – although we have taught on prayer in the past few years, this subject should be regularly revisited to equip and encourage members of All Saints in their prayer walk. (Prayer will be the subject of our midweek teaching in December.)

Authenticity – we are all different and different types of prayer suit different personalities⁵⁷. So different styles of prayer suit different people and we need to be authentic, that is pray in ways which match the person that God has made us.

Fasting – for many fasting is simply not part of their spiritual practice and experience. Those who do fast testify to the way in which their desperation for food drives them to their knees in holy desperation before the Lord. We should aim for a regular fast day each month.

Persistence – Jesus actually told his disciples a parable (the *Persistent Widow*) to 'to show them that they should always pray and not give up'⁵⁸. The great heroes of faith were persistent in their prayer life⁵⁹. Contemporary writers like Pete Grieg and Mark Batterson⁶⁰ similarly emphasise that persistence in prayer is essential.

Listening to the Lord – the Prophetic – as well as speak to the Lord above all we need to listen to him with a holy desperation to hear his voice. The Group that meets on Thursday mornings has generally focused on a listening and prophetic role. God does not speak to people who are not willing to set quality time aside to listen.

The Lord also wants to speak to the whole of his Church in Swanage. The Tuesday morning prayer meeting at the Salvation Army is becoming more and more prophetic and we should actively support it as it develops into a town wide prophetic prayer group.

⁵⁷ See the 24/7 Prayer 'Prayer Personality Quiz' at issuu.com/24-7prayerrooms/docs/what_s_your_prayer_personality_quiz?e=0/1876999

⁵⁸ Luke 18.1

⁵⁹ See eg George Muller who prayed for the salvation of 5 of his friends for 52 years, the last being saved just after his funeral – see bible.org/illustration/george-mueller-2.

⁶⁰ See the quotes from Mark Batterson's book 'The Circle Maker' at www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/16839389-the-circle-maker-praying-circles-around-your-biggest-dreams-and-greates

*'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'*⁶¹

Our 3rd Mark of Membership - Be part of a Branch Community

A new vision for small groups – NCD has established that 'holistic small groups' are a key part of what it means to be a 'healthy church'⁶². All Saints has had small groups for a number of years. However when Andrew visited St Paul's Weston-super-Mare he saw a new vision for small groups. The key differences from the home groups at All Saints were:

- **They were consciously outward looking** – the groups were intended to be intentionally missional. This is not to say that everything they do is evangelism. It is simply that the direction of travel should be looking outwards. So although most groups were not specifically evangelistic they prayed for and supported those members of the group who spent most of their time outside of church in the community. If we believe that the purpose of church is to see the kingdom of God coming power by the transformation of our community then we need to be looking outwards rather than inwards.
- **There were different types of groups** – as well as 'conventional' home groups (studying the Bible) the groups at St Paul's also included interest groups – including a football Branch, a *Zumba* Branch and a *Costa* Branch (because it meets in *Costa Coffee*)⁶³. These Branches get together usually on a weekly basis and do church together. Some of them (for example the football branch) include quite a number of non-Christians.
- **'Classic branches'** - even the 'classic' Branches which meet during the week to study of the Bible together, worship and pray are still outward looking and involved in outreach events (eg in helping with Alpha, praying actively for people they know to become Christians etc). The whole direction of the Branch network is outward focused.

What is distinctive about a 'Branch Community'?

There are four key distinctives of a 'Branch' over a home group

- They are identified as a Branch of the church, not simply a group which includes some church members.
- The leaders who are appointed by the church must be church members committed to attending to all central church meetings and training events.
- The leaders are committed to discipling the members of the Branch – and the members of the Branch are encouraged to disciple one another.
- The aim of the Branch is to create Christian community in a fun and informal way and to be outward looking.

⁶¹ John 15.5

⁶² For the full list of the 8 characteristics of a Healthy Church why not check out www.dioceseofcoventry.org/UnderstandingChurchHealth/Definingthe8EQs .

⁶³ Check out stpauls-weston.org.uk/belong/branch which details the different branches that are on offer at St Paul's.

The goal is to support and disciple individual members of the fellowship to enable them to be transformed and then go out into the community as agents of transformation. In most churches being a member of a small group is considered an 'optional extra'. But if we are to see the Kingdom of God come in power, the Branch network is absolutely vital in bringing this about.

A revived and effective system of Branches is the most important step we can take as a fellowship to enable God's people to step outside into the community in the power of the Holy Spirit and begin to transform it.

Extending the network

There are three key ways to extend the network of branches

- To raise the prominence of the Branches, by regularly reporting to the wider church about Branch activities, with an expanded display about Branches at the back of church and information about branches in the weekly newsletters etc.
- The appointment of Margaret Williams as Discipleship Pastor
- To extend the Branch network into other interest groups (eg sports, walking, arts & crafts, Coffee Pot, drama, puppets, Pub Alpha or a pub group, men's/women's groups, more daytime Branches etc).

Supporting the Branch leaders

The job of a Branch leader is already a demanding one. Leaders need to know that they are fully supported and emphatically are 'not on their own'. The system of support will include:

- A Discipleship Pastor for All Saints - the appointment of Margaret Williams for this important role is absolutely key to a renewed Branch network. Her task will be to see all the Branch leaders on a regular basis; to equip and disciple Branch leaders to help them both in their own walk with God and in their leadership role; to help the leaders disciple their own Branches and recruit new leaders; to help identify people who are looking for a Branch including people coming through Alpha; and to encourage new interest groups to become Branches in their own right.
- Margaret's role as Discipleship Pastor is a big job – we need to look to appoint a deputy/assistant for her.
- The essence of being a Branch leader is low control by but high accountability. What that means is that each of the Branch leaders will be tasked with putting together a program for their own group but with full support from Margaret and Andrew.

Discipleship

Jesus told us to make disciples. The essence of a disciple is someone who learns on the job, an apprentice. Our Branches require a change of emphasis to include discipleship as a primary objective of the Branch.

- To assist the Branch leaders we will put together materials and courses for the Branches including a monthly teaching event held midweek.

- We will also assist the Branch leaders in choosing the right teaching materials for their Branch (this will not of course apply to interest groups of course where the main aim is not Bible study – but discipling is still a core aim of those Branches).
- Margaret and Andrew will assist the Branch leaders in discipling their groups and courses for the Branch leaders will be made available which they will be expected to attend.⁶⁴
- Part of discipleship is training up successors. Branch leaders will be encouraged to identify members in their Branch who can succeed them and/or split off to form a new Branch.
- To encourage a culture of discipleship where we are discipling one another. St Paul's Weston talks about discipleship in three directions – *"who are you looking up to, who are looking into the eyes of [in other words accountability] and who are you pouring your life into"*.
- A key part of this will be to place younger less experienced Christians with more experienced disciples – the aim should be that all of our younger Christians who would like one-to-one discipling should be offered it.
- Older more experienced Christians still need discipling and we should encourage everyone to be part of a prayer triplet or partnership. Ideally this should grow naturally out of the Branches but may require the assistance of the Prayer Team leaders.
- Finally it is essential that we take personal Bible study seriously and we should encourage all our members to use Bible reading plans and/or notes. But even for those who are part of a 'book culture', the Bible is not an easy read. This means thinking imaginatively about different ways to access God's written Word.

⁶⁴ There will be a day on discipleship with Lynn Chetcuti of NCD in Autumn 2016.

*'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.'*⁶⁵

Our 4th Mark of Membership - Serve on a team

The Kingdom of God runs itself but the Church doesn't! So although Jesus is building his Church he wants us to play our part in that process. So one of the Five Marks of Membership is to serve on a Team⁶⁶.

What is a Team?

Teams are task groups which enable us to serve one another and the Lord. Just in case this all sounds like an optional extra it's worth remembering that

- Jesus made clear that his primary calling was as a servant⁶⁷
- he wants us to do the same⁶⁸
- one of the words for 'worship' in the New Testament (*latreuo*) literally means 'service'

The All Saints Teams

Since 2013 the All Saints Teams and Team leaders have done an amazing job in making sure that church happens. They cover far more ground than can possibly be covered by the vicar. However some of the jobs have proved just too big for one person to cover.

To ensure that the teams work more effectively some of them should be re-formed and their work subdivided to include

- All Saints Committee
- Breakfast@9
- Buildings/Facilities
- Communications/Website/Publicity/social media
- Evangelism & Community Outreach
- External Mission (the Mission Action Team)
- Hospitality (including responsibility for the kitchen and *Coffee Pot*)
- Pastoral

⁶⁵ John 13.14-15

⁶⁶ Of course we all have different abilities and experience. Some are more physically able than others. Some are no longer able to attend church physically but are still part of the Body of Christ at All Saints – and they still have a lot to offer with their wisdom, experience and prayerful support. So there is no reason why every committed member of All Saints cannot serve on a team according to our different abilities.

⁶⁷ Mark 10.45 – *'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'*

⁶⁸ John 13.14-15 – *'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.'*

- Prayer/Prayer Ministry/Prophetic/Healing
- Social & Events
- Stewardship Team – to include a stewardship ‘champion’ to help people with giving, Gift Aid and standing orders, and a budget officer to make sure that we make the best use we can of the money we spend (possibly the same person might undertake both roles)
- Teaching/preaching/service team
- Vicar’s Support Team
- Welcome team for the 10.30 service
- Worship
- Youth & Children (including Explore and Toddlers)

The All Saints Committee

Although we are part of the Swanage & Studland Team Ministry and the PCC is responsible for Team-wide deliberations and approving expenditure over £500, the key decisions affecting individual churches are made by the individual church committees.

The All Saints Committee is a Team in its own right. The gift of ‘administrations’⁶⁹ is the same word as that used for ‘steering a ship’. The people of God need wise counsel as they seek to move forward in his purposes. Psalm 100.4 encourages us to *“enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name”*. So we begin each Committee meeting with a time of worship to include the Lord in our meetings from the very beginning.

The Vicar’s Support Team

Andrew’s experience in his last church and at All Saints is that it is important to have a personal support team. This is not an eldership but a group whose function is to

- meet more regularly than the bi-monthly Committee meetings
- act as a sounding board
- hold the vicar accountable in his personal walk with the Lord
- discuss matters which are confidential which would not be appropriate for wider discussion at the Committee.

The Vicar’s Support Team includes the two churchwardens and others. Membership is at the vicar’s invitation, appointed for one year from September but renewable. The VST as at September 2016 consists of Rick Boland, Mike Hayes, Pauline Horder, Andrea and Ted Pratt, Tim Silk and Margaret Williams.

Support for Team Leaders

Being a Team leader should not seem like a life sentence! Team leaders should be

- appointed by the vicar but approved by the All Saints Committee
- appointed for 12 months from September in each year (renewable at annual intervals)

⁶⁹ 1 Corinthians 12.28

- meet up with Andrew three times a year (in September, January and May to review how the Team is doing)
- equipped – team leaders will have their own individual requirements but one objective of the 2011 Strategy we did not succeed in was to run the CPAS 'Growing Leaders' course. We should aim to do this for the year 2017-18. This is something that we might do in conjunction with other fellowships in Swanage.

Who is on a team?

The short answer is we all are! There is no reason why every single regular member of All Saints (who is able bodied and so able to attend church) should not serve on a Team.

But the plan is that we don't spend all our time doing church activities. So if everyone did something we'd get everything done without anyone being overloaded.

Also there are some teams that everyone should regard themselves as involved in. We should all be members of the Prayer team – because Prayer is one of our Five Marks of Membership.

Likewise we should all be members of the Welcome Team – in the sense that welcome is a job for every member of All Saints.

A key part of welcome is affirming and welcoming newcomers. One important way of doing this is holding newcomers lunches and teas. We would aim to do this once a quarter. As well as newcomers these would include Team leaders who would be able to share about their role and where newcomers might fit in. Talking of which....

Where do I fit in?

In 2012 we ran the SHAPE course⁷⁰ which was designed not just to help people find out where they should serve God within church, but also to find out the person that the Lord made them to be. If we know that we can start to look at where the Lord is leading us both inside his Church but also outside in the community.

Autumn 2016 is going to be a fairly full time of teaching but we should rerun SHAPE in the Spring of 2017 for those who did not do it last time, or who would appreciate a refresher.

The Teams should look outwards and not inwards

The aim is that we are intentionally missional in all that we do. And to see the Kingdom of God come in power through the transformation of our community the Teams have a vital role in helping to make this happen -

- **All Saints Committee** should keep an outward focus and hold the vicar to account to make sure he stays focussing outwards
- **Breakfast@9** will aim to continue attracting people who would not otherwise be in church

⁷⁰ 'SHAPE' stands for spiritual gifts, heart's desire, abilities, personality and experiences.

- **Buildings/Facilities** should be welcoming and available to the wider community
- **Communications/Website/Publicity/social media** aims to attract people to Christ and to our fellowship
- **Evangelism & Community Outreach** speaks for itself
- **External Mission (Mission Action Team)** also speaks for itself
- **Hospitality** (including responsibility for the kitchen and *Coffee Pot*) – a vital area of outreach – food is a Gospel value and a key way of attracting those who are interested
- **Pastoral** – our desire is to care for those who the Lord puts in our way
- **Prayer/Prayer Ministry/Prophetic/Healing** – spiritual gifts are key ways to spearhead the Gospel – and nothing will be accomplished without prayer
- **Social and Events** – a brilliant way to draw in those 'Not Yet Christians' who are looking for a place to belong and call home
- **Stewardship Team** –not just to ensure that we cover our costs but that we set a good example in the way we steward what God has given us
- **Teaching/preaching/service** team – it is vital that that our teaching stays outward focussed
- **Vicar's Support Team** – keeps the vicar on track and looking outward between Committee meetings
- **Welcome Team** for the 10.30 service – a key way of making contact with casual visitors
- **Worship** – inside and outside our building – is a key way of proclaiming that Jesus Christ really is Lord
- **Youth & Children** (including *The Wave, Explore* and *All Saints Toddlers*) – we have a remarkable opportunity in some of our groups to witness to children and young people many of whom would not otherwise be in contact with church at all

*'Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.'*⁷¹

Our 5th Mark of Membership - Give financially

The people of All Saints are wonderfully generous. In order to pay our way as a fellowship our giving has increased significantly over the last six years. We will be facing significant challenges next year in Team finances and should be very clear on our approach to finance as the Body of Christ at All Saints.

- The world's way is to 'cut our coat according to our cloth'. The biblical way is to fit our finances according to our faith. We must be wise in the future about what we spend. But the Lord owns *'the cattle on a thousand hills'*⁷². So in our budgeting we will seek the Lord about our vision as a fellowship and then ask him to provide – not the other way round (not adapting the vision to our anticipated income). If we are hearing correctly from the Lord then the money will be there – it's that simple.
- A key part of this is a clear understanding of biblical background to money and finance. We should teach about this annually each November when we look at finance for the following year – our people cannot be expected to give if they do not understand why they are giving⁷³.
- By setting up a Stewardship Team this will also reassure people that we are using what we are given carefully and to enable us to have more to bless others.
- We have tithed our income to mission since 2011 and the Lord has proved that his word is true – he has always provided as we have brought the full tithes into the storehouse.⁷⁴ This is a key part of our faith in finances and must continue.
- Giving of ourselves and our resources is of itself a transforming act. In particular we should continue Fundays, the Café and Carwash and other events to which the community are invited (eg the fundraising film evening on 17 September in aid of Swanage Action for Refugees) as opportunities to reach out to others with a practical demonstration of the grace of God.

⁷¹ 2 Corinthians 9.6-7

⁷² Psalm 50.10

⁷³ Tim Silk's talk on giving in 2014 was particularly well received

⁷⁴ Malachi 3.10 – *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."*

*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus –
Philippians 3.10-14*

God is on the move in Purbeck. It is a privilege to serve the Lord in such a beautiful part of the world but above all at such a time as this.

There is so much we want to see the Lord do. We will not see all that we want to see in our lifetimes. But we tend to overestimate what can be accomplished in one year, and underestimate what can be accomplished in five years. And like the Apostle Paul the Lord wants us to press on towards the goal that God has called us to - to see his Kingdom first come in our lives and then to be spread out to those around us.

The place to begin is ourselves. If we '*seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, [then] all these things will be given to [us] as well.*'⁷⁵

Then '*What is in us will become what is around us*'.⁷⁶

Will you join God's people in Swanage as we continue the adventure of a lifetime?

⁷⁵ Matthew 6.33

⁷⁶ To quote from Rick Boland our churchwarden.

Our Core Beliefs

Our Core Beliefs are about being:

- **Christ-centred** - We believe in the good news that God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, who became a man, died on the cross and rose again so that through him our sins can be forgiven and that we can live eternally with God.
- **Biblical** - We believe that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God containing the truths which underpin the way we aim to lead our lives.
- **Spirit led** - We believe that we live in the age of the Spirit as the Church of Jesus Christ, and that we must be open to, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit.

We try to live this out by:

- **Leadership** that is visionary, courageous, humble, consistent, full of faith, and releases church members into their God-given vocation.
- **Personal discipleship** that is based on living like Jesus, exemplifying love, prayerfulness, holiness, integrity, accountability, humility and generosity.
- **Inspiring worship** that is passionate, intimate, culturally relevant and brings people into an encounter with God.
- **Bible-based teaching and training** that is challenging, relevant, and equips for everyday life.

We seek to connect these to our aims by:

- **Being a local church** that is welcoming, inclusive, accessible for all generations and builds family and community life.
- **Encouraging** all members to discern their God given vocation and express God's love through the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Mission** that is outward looking, concerned with justice and care for the poor and shares the love of God with our community and the world.