



ST BARNABAS MISSION ACTION PLAN

THE GROUND WE COVERED FUTURE AIMING POINTS

August 2015

1. The Mission Action Plan (MAP) process was launched at the APCM in April 2014, and the Church's situation and options for the future were debated at a Parish Day meeting in July. Throughout the process comments were made by individuals and groups. A summary document "Going Forward" was issued following the July meeting. A "Progress and Issues" paper was produced in February 2015 which was considered at a congregation meeting on February 8th. At its meetings in February, May and July of 2015 the PCC discussed the key action areas.

2. The MAP is not intended to produce a fixed programme of activity captured at a single point in time. Some issues were clarified and actions taken as part of the process. More broadly MAP identified areas for continuing consideration and development that will be important to sustain and grow St Barnabas into the future. Working on these priority areas and learning from experience as initiatives are tried is, and will be, a continuing process. The important thing is that people associated with the life of the Church understand what it is trying to do and have opportunities to comment and to contribute.

Fulfilling our Aspirations

3. The opening of the Parish Centre in 2009 and the development of a variety of activities over recent years have already moved St Barnabas from a building open occasionally for worship to a place where "Church" can be experienced more frequently in a variety of ways. Experience elsewhere says that these "New Forms of Church" can be successful in attracting people to a broader Church community. This has been demonstrated at St Barnabas.

The Mission

4. The Church members now wish to reinforce their commitment to placing their Church at the heart of the community of Emmer Green. Their aim is to continue with the policy of offering a variety of ways of experiencing "Church" that will attract people having regard to their circumstances and preferences. There will be pathways to greater involvement and for the growth of faith. The Alpha Programme has been run successfully several times and has brought new people into active Church membership. Ways of nurturing and caring for people who do have a relationship with the Church will be strengthened.

The Means

5. Like many organisations mainly run by volunteers, St Barnabas will find its resources coming under pressure if it cannot attract younger people. More will be done to make the Church community aware of what resources of people and money are needed. Ways will be examined to encourage people to play their part in sustaining its activities.

The Vision

6. St Barnabas is the Parish Church in Emmer Green. It wants it to be seen as a Church living in the 21st Century and relating to the wider community in ways they will appreciate.

Finance

7. A demand for information on the Church finances became apparent. The PCC regularly received detailed information on finances. That information is publicly available, but it is probably more than most people need. A summary statement provided to the February congregation meeting was well received. Similar summaries will be produced on a quarterly basis in future.

Overseas Church Partnership

8. The MAP consultation process produced a suggestion that the Parish investigate what might be involved in setting up a partnership arrangement with an overseas church. Investigations showed that a formal partnership would be difficult to sustain, but steps are now being taken to strengthen links with the charity Education for Life in Mombasa and increase awareness of the issues facing the disadvantaged overseas.

Reaching Out to Families, Children and Young People.

9. Making St Barnabas attractive for families with children has emerged as a key priority. Younger people must be drawn to become part of the Church to counter what will otherwise be an inevitable decline in numbers over the years.

10. There has been, and will continue to be, an active Ministry for children and young people. The Busybees group for mothers and toddlers now runs every Monday in term time. Sunday groups exist for children. The Youth Fellowship is temporarily suspended because numbers are so low, but the aim will be to re-activate this as soon as possible.

11. A Family Service Group has been set up, and has worked on the services from January 2015. The COGS logo has been introduced, efforts made to better publicise the Service, and to provide content of wide appeal. The consensus is that a good start has been made, but the challenge will be to sustain the effort and attract congregations into the future. The PCC has encouraged the Family Service Group to be bold and take risks in trying new service forms and content. It is accepted that not all initiatives will be successful. Views from the congregation are still welcome on their experiences of the new arrangements, but it is unlikely that everybody will be comfortable with everything being organised. Since it is fundamental to the new approach that it is reaching out to all, a spirit of compromise and tolerance should prevail.

Communications

12. New volunteers are dealing successfully with the newsletter and the web site. Opportunities will be taken to update and improve both. A St Barnabas Facebook page has been set up, and is already demonstrating that attractive and up to date information can be quickly disseminated. The databases and records covering people in contact with the Church are being reviewed with the hope that they can be consolidated and made more useful. The aim is to have relevant information on peoples' links with the Church. That in turn should allow communications to be better targeted. More use is to be made of email, but experience shows that inappropriate use of emails and social media can produce problems. It is appreciated that not all congregation members have internet access, and they must still be catered for when information is being disseminated.

Group Activity

13. The role, organisation and activities of the various groups have been studied. The present diversity of structure and activity is valued, but there might be some limited scope for more consistency. There is a strong feeling that the numbers in groups should generally remain limited (probably no more than twelve) to encourage closer relationships. If the aim

is of increasing small group membership is to be achieved it will require the creation of more groups. A key to increasing participation will be providing more information so that prospective members can better understand what group membership offers.

Care of Church Members

14. Much good work is being done in many ad hoc ways, including in the Groups and the Parish Centre activities. A study of “befriending” ideas has shown that there are many ways to reach out to, and include, individuals. There has been no appetite or resources for “managing” the lay input to this work – by appointing a co-ordinator or training visitors. What might be done is to re-inforce the idea that everyone has a responsibility to take an interest in the welfare of the people around them in the Church. “Be-friending” therefore – through groups, activities and general social interaction – seems more practical as an approach than trying to institutionalise the more formal sounding “Pastoral Care” responsibility. Reporting of any concerns, through the various groupings or to the Ministry Team, will be encouraged.

Ministry Team

15. David Little’s attachment to St Barnabas has more than offset the problems that had been anticipated as the result of several retirements from the Benefice Ministry Team. This situation will not be sustained in the longer term, and difficult decisions on roles and resourcing will then have to be made. Actions are to be taken to maintain and hopefully strengthen the lay capabilities.

Volunteers

16. Efforts have been made to recruit more volunteers, but the response has been limited. Experience shows repeatedly that people are willing to take on, and carry out, tasks that they feel comfortable with. Efforts will continue to organise roles and tasks so that they are not too demanding. More information will be given when vacancies occur.

Leadership

17. As holders of current positions come to retire and Ministry Team resources come under pressure, it will be essential to introduce newer and younger people into leadership positions. Leadership is not just about a small group at the “top” of the organisation but covers everybody who has a role in sustaining any activity e.g. Group leaders and Children’s Church leaders.

18. The need to bring forward new leaders is a most important development area for St Barnabas. The “Growing Leaders” Course from the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS) has been identified as relevant and promising. Efforts are now in hand to run a “pilot” course for a year from September 2015. There are some difficulties since this Course relies to some extent on inputs from local churches that have already run the course, and there are none in the Reading area. Nonetheless the idea is being taken forward with the encouragement of the relevant Area and Diocesan officers. If successful, St Barnabas might then be able to offer support to other churches.

Other Concerns and Issues

19. The MAP consultation processes threw up a considerable number comments and concerns about a range of smaller issues. These were summarised –with reactions – in a report submitted to the February 2015 meeting of the PCC.