



ST BARNABAS MISSION ACTION PLAN

GOING FORWARD

1. In April 2014 a process was launched to prepare a Mission Action Plan (MAP). The first MAP document introduced the process, assessed the current situation and offered an analysis of issues and influences for discussion. A process of consultation followed, with responses received from individuals and from Church Groups. This culminated in a Parish Day open meeting on 5th July. This document identifies the main aims for St Barnabas that emerged, summarises the area of Church life and activity to be given priority for review and development, and sets out areas of action to be pursued in the future if the aspirations are to be realised.

2. 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

3. 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. Ways of nurturing and caring for people who do have a relationship with the Church will be strengthened.

The Means

4. 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

5. 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.

6. OUTREACH, CHURCH ACTIVITIES and WORSHIP

6.1 The ways people might experience “Church” and progress to deeper involvement will include:

- i. Events and activities which are primarily social, offering a welcome to informal relationships and gatherings.
- ii. Events and activities which have more religious content.
- iii. Services which are designed for those who might not be ready for more formal worship.
- iv. Introductions to the patterns of worship and participation that are established for “full” Church members.

6.2 The planning exercise confirmed that attracting and retaining younger families is a high priority. There are already a number of things organised with children and young people in mind but new ideas came forward. An Action will be to gather the views of young families see if more can be done to meet their needs. We will look in particular at events for families arranged at times they will find convenient.

6.3 A specific proposal which had been offered for discussion was making the Family Service a shorter, more informal service that would be more attractive for young families. This would be a non-Eucharistic service. There was considerable support for this idea, and it is consistent with the “pathway” approach above. However, there are concerns about the loss of the Eucharistic part of the service. The larger issue is resourcing. Such services – if they are to be appealing and worthwhile - need considerable preparation. As Ministry Team resources reduce, that Team will not have the time for all the work involved. Actions will be (i) to explore whether this change would be appreciated by families and (ii) is to see if a group of volunteers can be found to assist with the preparation of the Family Services. If these are encouraging, the new format could be trialled for six months to see if the hoped for increase in attendance is achieved.

6.4 Whilst attracting families is a priority, meeting the needs of older people remains important. The Parish Centre activities are appreciated and our provision will be maintained and developed where possible.

6.5 A “Friends Scheme” may be a way of creating a link with the Church short of being on the electoral roll. An Action will be to assess the feasibility and benefit of setting up such a scheme.

6.6 If our intentions to attract people are to be effective, they need to be informed of what we are able to offer, or the information needs to be accessible. We do have a web site, issue newsletters and produce leaflets, but ideas for other forms of communication have been put forward. An Action will be to review the communications practices and resourcing.

7. NUTURE and CARE in the CHURCH COMMUNITY

7.1 Two areas are considered:

- i. Small group activity
- ii. Pastoral care

7.2 Having thriving small groups which can offer both social and faith development is known to be an important part of Church life. St Barnabas has a variety of successful groups which have evolved with little central direction and largely organise their own activities.

7.3 The general feeling is that it will not be helpful to try to change the Fellowship groups to take on pastoral care and communications. This would need additional leadership effort and more volunteer time. There is a danger that something which works and is valued will be damaged without an assurance of new benefits flowing. An Action will be to better publicise the activities of groups and do more to encourage membership.

7.4 The need to better organise and extend the arrangements for the care of Church members is another high priority. An Action will be to assess the feasibility of setting up a volunteer group to undertake this important work.

8. RESOURCING

8.1 Ministry Team time is being reduced by retirements and will reduce further. An Action will be to plan for this reduction and clarify what roles the Ministry Team will undertake in the future.

8.2 The core groups of volunteers are not getting any younger and cannot be relied upon indefinitely. There seems little liking for a more managerial (directing) approach to the deployment of volunteers. The preference is to give more information about tasks, set them up in ways that are not too demanding and give more and continuing publicity. Personal approaches are seen to be effective. Creating paid part time posts remains an option. An Action Area will be to see what might be involved in doing more to specify task, provide training, encourage people to come forward, and support them when they do.

8.3 The Church's finances are currently in good order, but this cannot be taken for granted in the future. The information on finance in the MAP preparatory documents was welcomed, so an Action will be to produce information on finances more regularly and in forms more accessible for people who find the topic complicated.

Our Other Resource

8.4 What all Church members can do is pray for the efforts of St Barnabas to attract more people to Christ. As we consider issues where ways forward might not be obvious we should have minds open to God's will and guidance.

9. OTHER ISSUES

The discussion process for the MAP has thrown up number of comments on several aspects of Church life and practices. These need not feature in the "headlines" of a Mission Action Plan which is intended to look at strategy and key issues. These detailed points are, however, to be separately analysed and considered at the working level by the PCC and other interested members. They will be the subject of separate reporting.