

10th February 19

B Epiphany 6

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Place: St Mary's

Theme: Mission Vision Month results

- ◆ This morning I want to share with you the first fruits of our Mission Month. If you are on Churchsuite and we have your email address and your permission, you should have received a copy of the data from last Sunday by email. If you haven't we have printed out some copies which you can find at the back of church. On the results sheet the five marks of mission have been condensed to a single word beginning with T: Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform and Treasure.
- ◆ As a church we think that we are best at the first mark of Mission, To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom or Tell. I think that this reflects a general sense of satisfaction with the worship we offer, but I wonder how effective that is at proclaiming the good news to those outside the church?
- ◆ The marks of mission that we want to focus on in the future are responding to human need by loving service and seeking to transform the unjust structures of society. I was not surprised that caring for others was seen as very important, but I was very interested that social justice came just behind it. I think it reflects a maturity of thinking about what the causes of human need are.
- ◆ The night shelter came out as the activity that people wanted to invest most time and money in, with some people putting it as key we care for others and a similar number seeing it as a social justice issue too. It is interesting that we wanted most money to be spent on the nightshelter; as it doesn't take much money to run. It is however something that is very costly in terms of time. It needs a lot of volunteers in order to operate.
- ◆ I wonder whether thinking about how we spend our time as disciples of Christ is as much, it not more of a challenge for us as where we spend our money?

- ◆ Overall it feels like we are moving in a more outward looking direction, which is very healthy. We have a realistic sense of where we would like to be but recognise that we are not there yet.
- ◆ The key issue that came out of our community consultation also relates to this. There were a constellation of concerns around relationships, which correlates to the third mark of mission caring, which we most want to grow in and care most about. Good quality relationships are the most important value both for the wider community and the church and the one we most want to develop. This is important.
- ◆ The community are concerned about loneliness. It is interesting that this was the most commonly cited issue with concern not just for the elderly, which might have been expected, but also for people in the 20-40 age group, and generally for those who are single.
- ◆ Sadly, one of the most challenging results was that a significant number of respondents said that they found St Mary's unwelcoming. The site and buildings are seen as unwelcoming and uncomfortable, but I am sorry to say that we are too.
- ◆ The third issue related to relationships was a desire for better communication between St Mary's and the wider community and for us to enable better communication within the community. The further comments section from the congregation also called for improved communication.
- ◆ The Field was also an important concern. It is seen as a valuable resource and many people had suggestions for how we could make better use of it to serve the community. It is worth noting that this is part of the local environment that we are directly concerned for, but the environmental mark had the lowest score in all three categories. Is there a mis-match between our values and the community we serve here?

- ◆ Social justice also emerged as a concern for the wider community, although it was supporting refugees rather than the homeless that was the focus of concern from the community.
- ◆ What happens next?
- ◆ The ministry team are going to discuss this further this month. We are not looking for proposals for projects yet, but if you have any reflections on the results of our consultations please either email them to me or drop me a note so I can feed it into our discussions.
- ◆ I think we are ready to think about what a vision might be, but as a church we need to do a lot more thinking about discernment and what are values are. The better we understand what it means to be the church, who we are as the Baptised, what our individual calling is and who we are together in Christ the better informed our decisions about what we are going to do will be.
- ◆ In particular we need to think about the following questions in more depth:
 - ◆ What does it mean to be welcoming? Hospitality is a key biblical value, what does scripture have to teach us about it?
 - ◆ How do we build good relationships? What do they look like, what values underpin them?
 - ◆ How do we overcome loneliness? What is missing when someone feels lonely?
 - ◆ In the Gospel today Jesus told us that the values of this world are not God's values. How do we make sure our values are aligned with the Kingdom of God? How do we discern together the way God wants us to respond to the needs and desires we have identified?