

Update

Keeping in touch with God and each other.

MAY 2006

Dear friends,

The annual report I signalled in April is summarised here. The reaction to this at the annual meeting was enormously encouraging; I follow the diocesan “toolkit” Shaping your Church for Mission, recognising where God is at work, identifying weaknesses and priorities. Please read and pray.

Since that Annual Meeting we have had Holy Week and Easter, God at work over and over from Palm Sunday, Coventry at the Cross (with Ian Knox), Christ in the precinct, Agape, Good Friday, Easter Eve concert, Confirmation of Kate Every, and on Easter Day baptism of Sarah Bevan, Esther Sidebotham, Louise Taylor, Peter Wadey and Adam Williams, powerful testimonies, ministries of the word, and anointed worship. I have had appreciation given to me by some who were present at Easter for the first time and I would like to pass on enormous thanks again to everyone who before during and after these services worked so hard to make them happen. I would like to welcome Rob Wakefield as a new churchwarden and thank Bill Johnson again, reiterating my words to him and all those who I included in our thanks on that day.

As May begins we listen to the First letter of John and the theme “Love Together”. May 25th is Ascension Day and another opportunity for worship and witness with the cathedral and St John’s. Pentecost is not until June (4th) but I would like to flag that day up as our next joint service at 10.30. Ian Knox will preach and the following four Tuesdays in June will lead sessions at the church centre on sharing our faith. As Sam Corden has just let us know that this Alpha course had fewer guests than those we have offered previously, it seemed to me the Lord might have been planning this to help us with any fears we have in this area of our Christian life. Maybe now would be a good moment to set those evenings aside and come along.

I close with some words from 1 John

“God is love and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear...”
(4:16-18)

With love

Keith

Summary of the Annual Report of

Rev. Keith Sinclair

Find below a summary of my annual report which I gave at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners on 3rd April 2006. Copies of the full document are available from the website or church office. <http://www.HolyTrinityCoventry.org.uk/report2006.pdf>

Shaping the church for mission: Annual report 2006

I am using the toolkit from the Diocese "Shaping your church for mission" as the basis for this report. I have found it extremely helpful in identifying where we are and where we should be going to next. It is based on 8 questions which I propose to go through now and ask congregation teams, clusters and small groups to use as well.

Where do we see God at work?

2 .What is holding us back?

3 .What might God be calling us to do?

4 .What might God be calling us to stop?

5 .What then are our priorities?

6 .How can we resource what we want to do?

7 .How might we use our resources for the benefit of others?

8 .What resources and support would we value from others in the diocese and outside?

We have a vision statement "To be a transforming community, making disciples for God's kingdom in Coventry and beyond". It bears a striking resemblance (not planned) to the diocesan purpose statement that the churches are here "to worship God, make new Christians and disciples, transform communities".

That's what we are about.

Viv Thomas at the excellent parish weekend last June spoke on the three dimensions of a mature Christian community: communion (our relationship with God) community (each other) and mission (God's world). I think the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us something, "we are on the right lines". We are shaping ourselves in accordance with what God is doing and wants to do even more in the church in this country.

I will refer in what follows to a recent publication by the Church of England "The road to growth: towards a thriving church" written by Bob Jackson, Archdeacon of Walsal and Growth Officer for the Diocese of Lichfield. His thesis based on systematic research and hard evidence is that the numerical decline of the Church of England is neither inevitable nor irreversible.

Numbers come at different moments in the Biblical account of God's people, so they matter, but of course they are not everything by a long way. They are like seeds, each one of us is a seed bearing plant, and as we grow and flower, so seeds will be scattered and bring others to growth; that's the idea; for us as individuals, for us as small groups and clusters, for us as congregations and a whole church. The exercise with the questions is to see how we as the plants are flowering and whether we can help ourselves and others to grow by some tilling of the ground and some fertilising of the soil! As St Paul says it is "only God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:7) and he does and will.

Question 1 - Where do we see God at work and how can we build on what is working well?

What follows is quite a long list. It is highly personal (from my perspective) and you can tell me what I have not seen.

Look at the congregations

Sunday

8.00 I never leave without having met with the Lord and am glad the old prayer book is part of our DNA. 8.00 majors on communion, but not so much on community or mission (though many are members of a small group learning to cluster!)

9.30 God at work in the leadership team and team leader Geoff Wilcox; God at work in using of the manifold gifts across the congregation in worship (just look at the rota!!!!); God at work in the Sunday club and YAP, see those now coming through the children, see Kids praise, see the crèche and the rapid new additions as we go into 2006; God at work in the breakfasts and growing friendships. The

offering of new technology in worship is superb.

11.00 God at work in an anointed traditional service; in the prayer for the congregation by the leadership team; in the ministry of the choir under the direction of Chris Howard; in the growing servers team; the growing ministry to children; in the growth of a multi ethnic congregation; the beginnings of a crèche; and again those willing to offer their gifts in prayer. I feel a frustration that I have not been able to give more time to pastor and help the congregation to grow more. The potential is enormous. God is at work. But how to build on the community that is there, how to grow community in a congregation to which people may come because they just want it to be “me and God” not “us and God”; and how to grow a sense of mission.

4.30 If you have never been I encourage you to put into your Sunday once a term to come (esp if you are a 9.30 &/or a 7.00). You will join in an act of worship which combines not only superb music, but offered by a choir serious about worship; God at work in that offering, in singing the psalms, in hearing the word of God, in intercession. One service of the year of special importance is the annual service for the bereaved at Evensong at All Saints. I ask us to pause and remember those taken from us this year. I ask us to remember especially David Jasper. God at work in people’s lives.

7.00 God at work in the growth of the congregation over the last two years; in the leadership of Emma Griffiths and Hennie Johnston; in the growing of a new leadership team and the same pattern of gifting and service which is developing. God at work in another diverse and gifted congregation with a bit more time and a bit less pressure than in the morning to worship, enter into prayer ministry and take a few risks! God at work in the strong sense of community complementing small groups; and a sense of mission growing with it often being first port of call for those coming into the church from the Alpha course.

Midweek congregations

Tuesday 1.00. God at work here? Yes. The service has changed to alternate communion with a said service to give more time for healing prayer in the half hour. God at work in Elke Every’s leadership of the team; the growing of new members within the team; the working through the not always easy process of adapting to something new; the willingness to wait and let the Lord keep the healing ministry alive at Holy Trinity; the inspiration to take risks and fan into flame the gifts which God will bless across the other congregations. Numbers remain constant, but there is a waiting, and I believe the new West Doors and Noticeboards will make a difference midweek to those who know something is happening here and will come.

Wednesday 10.30 (Kindergarten) A congregation of between 25-30 with new people joining. Again the prayer book and again the Lord at work; in the community and care of those who come and those who no longer can come; in feeding those who give enormously in the midweek welcome team; in resourcing the home ministry team (a small but growing team coordinated by Ann Brown and blessing Spencer Newman House this Christmas in a way not imaginable a year ago); in communion and community; in mission.

Thursday 1.00 (Lunchbreak) God at work? Just read Mavis Newell’s letters for our regular outreach; a real passion for the city, and love leading us into growth; a growing number catching the vision; an amazing growth of previous members of Holy Trinity (and others) now ordained and serving around the city, coming to give great teaching and drawing new people. God at work in those for whom these congregations are their main Christian fellowship, I think of a woman whose husband forbids her to worship in a Christian church. Growing communion, community and mission. And God at work (here as in the 9.30 and 7.00) with our link with Nexus Music Cdlege. God is at work in the **Alpha courses**; in the numbers of guests; in the leadership of Sam and Jean Corden; in the partnership with the Cathedral; in the service of the small groups; in the formation of new groups; in those who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; in those who have come for baptism; in those who have been added to our number. Sam has spoken of the blessing of these courses which outweighs anything he has known in his years of evangelism. I endorse that. For me it is not only seeing people who have been quite hostile and sceptical come to real faith and belief, it is seeing God working right outside the church bringing people into a spiritual experience which makes them want to seek out the Alpha course (through our website or noticeboard) and come along. When I first asked Sam and Jean to take this on we agreed a 5 year plan; we have one more to go. As a church we must decide what we are going to do in response to what God is doing I don’t think the Lord will believe it right to ask Sam and Jean just to carry on without some sense of others growing into this leadership and responsibility. It is hard work, it is not all highs, but it is one of the most rewarding dimensions of ministry I think I have ever had the privilege to know.

Small groups and Clusters; God working in Hennie’s leadership; for being the church at grass roots level working out our vision statement; with 25 leaders coming to a residential in January; for the new groups; for groups being willing to

“cluster” together to better be able to work in mission, community and communion; for risk taking and trusting God; for “huddling” learning to trust each other with how we are in God; being willing to adjust as groups change and Geoff and I have each taken over a cluster; with seeing God surprise us and bless us from people from parts of the church we don’t know; from offering in service at Alpha and outreach; for staying the course when it gets tough; for staying open to new people; for risking hospitality even if it’s not your gift. This is demanding ministry and absolutely vital to growth.

Meeting Place. God at work in the testimony of Angela Smith and Bill Johnston; and in the Tuesday and Thursday team (joined this year by at least one of those who have come to the Lord through Alpha); in the preaching during October; in the testimony of those who come and for whom it is church; in the obedience to the gospel; in the fellowship with the other churches. Mission, community and communion are all there, could it be that the more Trinity celebrates and embraces this ministry the more we will grow in all three. As Meeting Place featured in the liturgy in October can I also acknowledge God at work in our reviewing both our use of money (ethical investment) and our giving of money (a generous community) also during this last year. A group is needed to explore our use of money, any volunteers?

Welcome Team alongside the **Fairshare shop**; God at work, in the leadership of Rita Kenderdine (who has stepped down and to whom enormous thanks are due) and Sheila Filsell; in those who have been willing to serve as part of the team; in the numbers of people coming!; in the finalisation of the Guide Book and Doom display (thank you Lynn Jones); in the special events of the year (including the Heritage W/E and the Godiva Festival (one person came on the autumn Alpha through that w/e stand in the park); in the work of the small group trying to get “Friends of HTC” going to harness support long term from our visitors. And though our literature and noticeboards extend beyond the welcome team in their influence and ministry, can I thank Catherine Kendal (and team) for their valiant efforts to get us moving and renewed in both over this last year, a task where the frustrations of getting us to agree have as yet I think outweighed the sense of achievement!!

Home Ministry Team already mentioned; and those who take communion to housebound and visit. Lovely card from one so glad to be included in the mailing for the reordering!

New baptism preparation group, using ST ART course with Peter and Elke Every leading; and God working enabling us to use this at **Dudley Lodge** and for the strengthening of those from HTC as volunteers there.

God working in our links with the world wide church; through the CMS Mission links Pat Gilmer; with Charlie Turner in Jerusalem; in prayer for John and Rachel Waters in the Middle East; and with SE Asia through Servants and OMF; in a new link person for TEAR Fund (many thanks to Anne Bevan, handing over to Gillian Gwinnet, married this last year, and Tracy Drew); and last but definitely not least the bond with Kenya, and St Paul’s Theological College Kapsabet; the brilliant Harambi; the unforgettable week in Kenya; God working through Rev Ignatius Sheri coming to Coventry for the Peace Month and for the Lunchbreak service which was the best supported of all the events the City included in the Peace Festival!

How can we build on this? Well the answers to the other questions give some answer to this. All of this contributes to why a new member of Kindergarten said to me on coming into Holy Trinity that he felt this was a place where people prayed and took the Bible seriously. Amen, God at work.

Question 2 - What is holding us back - about which we can do something?

Weak state 1: is people, including me, stretched to the limit of what we can do; squeezing more in (or out) is not an option. Now if growth or change is of no interest to us then this pattern can be sustained for a short period. But after a while the disconnection between our keeping the plates spinning and our deep knowing that God has called us to growing will lead to burn out, loss of morale, and decline.

If we know that God is calling us to growth, then we must ask two questions?

1. How should my/our pattern of life change to be more fruitful and less stretched?
2. Is God calling anyone else to share these ministries?

Weak state 2: is the need to combine welcome with integration into HTC. Going beyond welcome so that people quickly have a way of knowing the vision and passion of the church, and how we try to make that happen.

Weak state 3: is the support and resourcing of those many, many members of HTC involved in leadership; of congregations, small groups and clusters; children and youth, and other areas. As the church grows the need for leaders will

grow; at present we don't have any training in place for those leaders, we might just ask them to do it!! We may fill gaps but that's not discipleship growth.

Weak stave 4: is risk taking in prayer; seeking and receiving prayer is still a minority occupation; there is widespread welcome of the availability and principle; but not so much availing of the opportunity. It's like knowing there is a great food store, but never shopping there!! This may be about some faith/healing issues, and confidence in the ministry being offered.

Weak stave 5: is the gifting to move people in our city and network of work or neighbourhood out of their being closed to the gospel to being open. This I think is almost the \$64,000 question for all churches. If people become open, then all the other stepping stones we have like Alpha, START etc would be overwhelmed. There would be revival. So this is by no means some easy quick fix; but if that stave got raised and people in Coventry began to move in numbers to be open to the gospel, the growth of all the congregations would be akin to a Tsunami.

Question 3 - What might God be calling us to do?

Weak stave 1: people stretched to the limit

My answer to this question doesn't immediately affect everyone except in this: for us all to celebrate the freedom we have been given in the gospel to live in the way God purposes for us to live; the gospel call never stops being "come to me you who are weary and I will give you rest....."; if we ever turn being a Christian into a chore, we have lost the plot. Some in small groups, congregation teams, and others will have come across "huddling"; this is learning to be open to each other, encouraging each other in Christian growth; this fosters communion with God and relationship with each other, and lays the foundation for mission. Everything we do should be helping us to grow in these ways.

To help us do this I think we need to focus the role of the congregation teams, and all those in any kind of leadership, to develop communion, community, and

mission. I'm putting in an appendix a rough guide to congregation teams to unpack

what this might mean for those teams. I would like each team to report back at each year's annual meeting under those three headings so we are consciously devolving responsibility and accountability to the teams. If this works, each congregation will have a better sense of what it is doing and why, and how it is getting along. Each team can use these 8 questions as a way of looking at their own life and where the Lord wants to grow them. If clusters of small groups are able to do the same by next year, great, but they may need more time to get going.

I hope this strategy will help address the problem of people being at full stretch all the time, and at the same time help us to see where God wants us to put our energies.

I do still have a concern expressed in that second question, "Is God calling anyone else..." HTC organises its leadership on the traditional basis of Vicar and curate. We have provision for one other full time staff member for ministry, the youth minister; and full time paid provision for verger; the other paid positions are all part time, two relate to music and one to administration.

It is quite amazing and wonderful that much of the running of HTC comes from voluntary giving of people of their time. However, despite the huge amount of volunteer help, it seems to me that if HTC wants to sustain and increase the growth that has begun and for which we undoubtedly have huge potential, we need to think very seriously about resourcing our ministry with further paid provision for ordained and lay leadership. This is why a valiant small group have been working with me to create a Friend of HTC network that could resource this ministry; it may well be that such resourcing should go beyond "Friends", and some who may want to be part of "Friends" may want to support the fabric or some other part of the church. However we do it, I think the time is now for us to look to what the Lord is giving us and see if we need to move out in faith. We cannot assume Hennie will be replaced by another curate, so this needs to be in our prayers and on our hearts now, as the Bishop's license for her to remain ends in August 2007.

Weak stave 2: combining welcome with integration into HTC

I am proposing two lines of attack. A short series of three evenings each term welcoming new people and introducing them to the church's life. It will be an introduction to the life of the church and so that people can make an informed choice about committing to this community. It needs those welcoming in each congregation identifying and inviting new people along.

For the rest I think it is really down to being willing to do no more than practise hospitality. Some have wondered whether designating one Sunday a month to encourage busy people to think about this (and turn aspiration into actuality!) is a good idea, and my response is if we think it will help, then let's do it. I am aware of the many deep friendships that have and are growing at HTC so I don't mean to quench the Spirit; I was worried when I heard someone had been coming for over a year before anyone (including me) had asked them round.

Weak stave 3: the support and resourcing of people

Continuing on from (1) above, it is a fact that mostly every kind of leadership is not ordained and unpaid!!! We should thank God every day for each other. To recognise the pressure and to grow the future I believe we should include in HTC's DNA a leadership training course. I propose to introduce a new course called "Growing Leaders". It runs for a year on the basis of meeting once a month. I, Hennie & Geoff hope to begin it in the Autumn with as many present and potential leaders as we can manage attending.

Weak stave 4: Prayer/healing

Again this is something grown from small seed. Hennie has put on some excellent training evenings and there is a growing desire among some to see if this is their gift. My sense around Tuesday is that we are still in a time of waiting over this ministry. The pictures about its place in our calling have been quite unambiguous that it should be central. I am asking Bishop John whether he would be willing to come back to HTC this year and lead us in some further teaching which might be of help to others in the diocese. Other than that it remains one of the core activities of the early church that when they met together they shared in the prayers (Acts 2:42); the "huddling" in small groups and other places should help us to seek this prayer, to trust each other, and if there are worries/wounds which are hindering us that we talk about them and address them, rather than remain as broken limbs that are not reset.

Weak stave 5: people moving from "closed" to "open" to the gospel

It is really unfair to call this a weak stave because we might easily say "it's not for want of trying!"; we would love family, colleagues, friends etc to become open to God, but we can't make them!! It's true we can't. This is not at all to beat us up about lacklustre prayer, it is just to share this insight from a recent New Wine leaders day which I attended. I thought bringing the thousands who stream through the city centre (sheep without a shepherd) in prayer for a moving from being closed to being open just focuses us on the reality of the spiritual state of the city and gets us to engage in prayer at a new dimension. I have been hugely encouraged in praying like this by the last Alpha course and those whom God has met outside the church and brought along without any direct invitation from anyone at HTC. This is, I think, asking for the gift of faith that will move mountains.

Question 4: What might God be calling us to stop?

The short answer is I don't know. Maybe we need to stop trying to organise ourselves as if we were a small church and recognise that we are not, we are several small and not so small churches together, with a common vision and a common heritage (HTC). I do not want to stop any of the current services or any of the current ministries.

My "no's" are no to isolation, we commit to meet together in congregations, small groups and clusters; no to complacency, we commit to pray and seek growth in discipleship and God's kingdom; and no to conformity, we commit to becoming a transforming community in Coventry and for Coventry and beyond.

Question 5: What then are our priorities?

Here is my list:

1. The appointment of a youth minister
2. The continuation of the reordering
3. The beginning of "Growing Leaders" to support, train and nurture leaders across the church.
4. The establishing of a "welcome course"
5. The devolving more down to the congregation teams
6. Ring fence monies for the resourcing of ministry lay and ordained This is about growing new ministry not abandoning the old!

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7. Review the support of and resourcing of leadership, with particular reference to the Alpha Course

Question 6: How can we resource what we want to do?

By God's grace alone! The first thing to be said is the obvious truth that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psalm 24:1); in other words the Lord is not short on resources for his kingdom in the world. He has given us gifts (Ephesians 4:7-13) and a vital strategy for the avoidance of burn out and breakdown is identifying them, releasing them, sustaining them. Congregations, small groups and clusters are the place where this is being and must go on being done. Once "Growing Leaders" is in HTC's DNA then this will be a key resource for long term growth.

Establishing a ministry fund and identifying on the whole church front what we did in the youth and children's subgroup, that is, look ahead and anticipate need and how we can respond in faith to meet it

Identify external funding sources. Developing the Friends of HTC network as a possible source of support. Securing the greatest possible support, financial and otherwise, from the Diocese, working always in partnership with them, particularly in the Coventry North Deanery of which we are part.

Continuing to teach on giving. Updating the "Guide to Giving" each year, and praying for fruit from the teaching series on being a generous community from 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. Write to those on the electoral roll who are not yet giving regularly (by whatever means) to ask them prayerfully to consider the call of God.

Question 7: How might we use our resources for the benefit of others?

I've identified 7 areas where this is happening now.

1. Youth and children's ministry: with the cathedral ministry to Goths; Coventry Youth Camps and Youth For Christ.
2. Fresh Expressions; ministry to the clubbers with Cathedral and St John Baptist and diocese.
3. Alpha; with cathedral and wider Coventry network.
4. Meeting place.
5. Lunchbreak's ministry with other churches in city.
6. Being open to church plant in Coventry North deanery.
7. Support of mission agencies and individuals; CMS, TEAR Fund, Christian Aid, Kenya, Servants etc.

Question 8: What resources and support would we value from others within the diocese and outside?

These are listed in the full document.

Conclusion

I close with renewed conviction in us as the body of Christ; with whom for some reason, the Lord has not yet given up!! Bill Hybels gave this *crie de coeur*, based on Acts 2:42 – 47, for the church that we be a community "where the lost are found, the found grow, the isolated are knit together in community, and those sitting down can stand and take up the towel."

"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever Amen. (Ephesians 3:20,21)

Climate Change

“I don’t think it’s compatible with the Christian ethic to ignore the environmental degradation that we face – it’s a question for everyone, and therefore a moral imperative”.

Those were the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking in a BBC interview about the urgent need for action on climate change. If you’ve been reading that it’s time for us to do something about climate change, but are not sure what, here is an opportunity for you. Holy Trinity has been invited to take part in a pilot project to try and measure how much we as a church contribute to carbon emission, our so called carbon footprint. This would be a first step in trying to reduce our impact as a church on global warming. It’s never been tried for churches before, as far as we’re aware – and we need lots of help to do it

If interested, please see me,
Jeremy Bevan.

Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill

Lord Joffe’s Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill, which seeks to legalise assisted suicide in England and Wales, is due for its second reading in the House of Lords on 12th May.

We are strongly opposed to this bill and believe it to be a deeply flawed piece of legislation that will put the most vulnerable members of society at serious risk.

A petition against the bill was launched on the Care Not Killing website (www.carenotkilling.org.uk/petition) at on Thursday 13th April.

If you share our concerns please visit the website. It only takes a few moments to sign.

To enable those without internet access to sign, and to take to churches or workplaces, you can download a petition form from the website which can be mailed in, once complete.

Please spread the word and join us in gathering support by forwarding this message to sympathetic friends, family, work colleagues and others.

The petition will be delivered to 10 Downing Street on 12th May

Peter Saunders, General Secretary, Christian Medical Fellowship.

Peugeot Closure

Bishop Colin and Bishop John have released the following statement:

‘The decision to close the Ryton plant has come as a huge blow, not only to the Peugeot workers and ancillary manufacturers, but to the whole city of Coventry. On behalf of the churches we would like to express our deep sympathy for all those affected by this decision and to assure them of our prayers. Ecumenical chaplains from Mission in the World of Work are in touch with the company and the unions, offering personal support for those workers and their families who are directly involved. The ability to work is basic to our human identity and sense of self-worth. We urge all local employers to do all they can to absorb the many skills and talents now available to them.

Ever since 1940 the people of Coventry have shown a remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. The new Cathedral is an internationally recognised symbol of faith that death and destruction will always give way to life, hope and new beginnings. We pray that this most recent dark event will soon lead to a new dawn.’

Mission in the World of Work have produced a helpful guide for people facing redundancy and copies of this can be obtained from Graham Harwick at Graham.Harwick@CovCofE.org Graham also asks that, if you know anyone affected who would welcome support, then please contact him.
