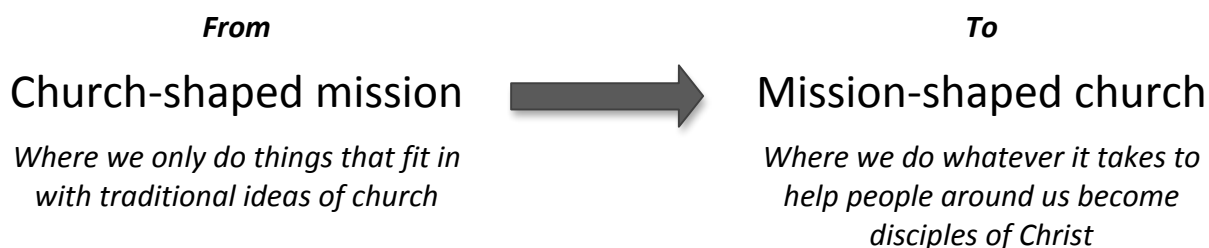


St James Carlisle

A MISSION-SHAPED CHURCH?

On 15 October 2011 a group of “leaders” (PCC members, home group leaders, staff and others) spent the day at Lanercost Priory with the vicar, Rod Allon-Smith. Rod led us through a programme of teaching and discussion to explore how St James can move...



There was a strong consensus that we need to pay more attention to the quality of our relationships, both with each other and with people in the community.

Rod then introduced the idea that any real mission activity needs three elements:

Presence: being available to people

Service: doing something that helps people

Proclamation: explain something of the Gospel

Rod also introduced the Engel Scale, which helps us recognise where people are on their journey; from being merely aware of the supernatural, through various stages of interest and commitment through to effective sharing of their own life and faith. We can use this understanding to make sure we provide opportunities that work for people at different places on the scale.

He went on to describe how St James’s mission work will be unique, stemming from our:

Community Context: the population, culture and needs around us

Local Inheritance: things like the nature of our congregation, our skills and assets

Church Context: in the deanery, the city, the diocese and nationally

The Emerging Future: our mission, hopes, possibilities and so on

Rod asked each person there to write a couple of thoughts against each of those four headings and then hand them in. Those comments provide deep insight into our congregational life and our relationship with the communities we serve. They have all been collected together into this document which the PCC sees as an agenda for mission, guiding our work as a PCC and as a church for some time to come.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Being relevant

Denton Home is diverse. Question: Do we appeal to that diversity?

Finding out what Community needs, not assuming we know what these are x 2

Who are the people of Denton Holme? We need a true core knowledge of our local profile/demographic not just the people at church trading in labels for awareness.

Being Christ to people

Meeting the community where they are x 2

Identifying and meeting needs – both practical and spiritual

Lots of need in local area – young families, elderly, students but many will be at -10 on Engels scale

Engaging with the parish, where people are, their needs, engaging more with the local schools. Fostering and developing real relationships with people out of genuine love for them not to trick them into 'joining church'

Relationships – be ready for long haul relationships

Helping with chronic practical need

Meeting the needs of the poor eg food bank

Identifying and meeting needs – both practical and spiritual

Variety of needs – drugs, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, young families, youth, behaviour, offenders

Ministering to specific groups

Having impact in areas where no impact at present

Take note of developments in Denton Holme, eg. Student village

Identifying and creating opportunities for vulnerable groups

Mens needs

Good relationships with schools

Students living locally or in the town

Lone parents and their children

Uncertainty within businesses in Denton Holme

Social responsibility to promote and instigate family values into a broken community.

Ways forward?

Cornerstone

Cornerstone needs to have employed missionary who has a real heart for Evangelism and able to motivate the church to get out of their comfort zone – please, please get the right one!

Half-way house for casual contacts

What (we think) we already know

Varied community – we need to be relevant and non-judgemental in our conversations and interaction with others

Alternative activities for people to spend time in/on (Sundays)

Carlisle is insular/isolated

Quite strong community identity with good range of facilities/shops

Population – some very rooted (several generations) some very recent/transient (students or immigrants)

Are we the right people to do all this?

Where the regular congregation actually live – proportion in the parish

Engaging with a different social class without being judgemental

More engagement with those in need, not just the middle class congregation

LOCAL INHERITANCE

Spiritual strengths

Strong biblical teaching/preaching x 6

Godly ministries

Public perceptions (we think)

Strong acceptance that St James is the local church x 5

Good reputation

Track record

History of St James Church development and growth of the parish

Positive vibes from memories of BB

Wide range of current activities

Our people

Loyal church members

Practical and spiritual gifting

Core of committed skilled people serving, breadth and depth of skills

Middle class congregation

Mixture of all ages

Yes but...

Lack of depth in relationships, especially on fringes and in comparison to core people's service

We can become complacent because we have good attendance

Some local people disinterested

One point all on its own

'Needy' people in the community

Ways forward that spring from what we're already doing?

Using school links to reach whole families

Guest Services continuing to develop and be open to change to meet needs of Baptism parties

Recontact – Baptism, Marriage, Death

Op Shop Contacts

Pastoral Care

Need to keep links with Denton Holme and develop through Cornerstone

Honouring traditions sacred to many and making room for risk taking

Re-do the SHAPE skills exercise to encourage people to put gifts to good use

CHURCH CONTEXT (1)

It's great being C of E

Being parish church brings us into contact with people through weddings/baptisms/funerals x 2

If only we weren't C of E

CoE tradition can hamper us

False teachers eg. Pushing for same sex marriage

Natural assets

Helped by being a physical beacon and point of contact in the community – people will come to us if they have a need.

Encouraging things about us

Encouragements- Number of people who come to church say under 40/50 on PCC

Range of gifts/creativity

Discouraging things about us

Hindered by the fact that we can't often meet their spiritual need in our current church culture.

Lack of prayerfulness

Too middle class

People may feel as though they don't/can't belong eg. Single mothers, divorced as don't fit the church ideal.

Don't mention the ~~war~~ sermons!

Remembering people's attention spans – ie. Sermon

Preaching needs to be understandable to folk, particularly at Guest Services ie. Focus on gospel and not as long

The workers are few

Lack of involvement by many – happy to stay on fringes

Constraints of too few doing too much.

Getting more people involved at the 'coal face'

We need the support of the full fellowship of St James – not just a small committed few.

People to offer time/services

Continue to recognise and encourage to release people gifts and skills x 2

Ways forward?

Helpers and Leaders must be supported if Cornerstone is to be as effective as we/God wants it to be.

Opportunities for all to be involved – age range etc

Mobilise men/women, youth – a 'help' team for our community

More space in church itself for meeting people eg. Take out side pews(?) so can talk to visitors as unlikely to come across to parish centre

Focus on other churches to link with Cornerstone

Training/agreeing as a community on how we reach out and treat guests in our "family"

Wider city focus – both as individual church and with Pray for the City

'One to one' fellowship for growth within the church for all the church

Understanding difficulties people have in coming to church

CHURCH CONTEXT (2)

If only...

Would like to see fresh expressions of church in our community to fit in with the change in Sunday culture

A mission shaped church with all true disciples willing to be involved in drawing others to Christ.

All believers to reflect a unity of 'All one in Christ Jesus'

Becoming a church community without a particular label

Be organised – but also be organic ie. Flexible, living rather than mechanical

People searching for meaning of life – church to provide that meaning

Could be good, could be bad

Depth of commitment

Finances

Bishops Vision for Cumbria – unsure whether challenge/spur on to further discipleship or complacency

THE EMERGING FUTURE

The answer is Cornerstone – now what’s the question?

Cornerstone x 4

Cornerstone is key to reaching the community

Cornerstone project – more opportunities for outreach

Cornerstone – need to follow that vision through

Relationships with people

Relationships x 2

Starting where people are – what questions they are asking

More prayer, more love, more understanding of where people are “their story”, more friendliness, more hospitality

Take every opportunity to show all in parish God’s love, care and compassion, whatever their situations or lifestyles

Care for practical, physical, emotional as well as spiritual needs

To be a caring community and to show practical love to those who are outside our social circle

Radical stuff (by St James standards)

Church plant for those who don’t fit into our model of church

Need to get out of our church building and into community

Get out there – Out-reach not In-grab

Need to reach out from church and accept we have to make the move but to do fewer things well.

Becoming relevant, finding connections to those who are different/unchurched

Getting our own act together

We need to get our relationship right with the fellowship first

Corporate prayer

More commitment to prayer – set up small groups/triplets

Vision and direction known and shared by all

Disciples who make (or craft) disciples x 3 – equipping every member of the church to do so

Discernment about how God wants to do mission

Practising the presence of God moment by moment

Taking risks

Don’t worry about making mistakes – just follow Christ and be obedient

Where is there room for risk taking – programmatically really and truly? Is it safe to fail in our community?

Not to mention....

Families/Fathers

Centralisation vs. de-centralised?

Guest Services – welcoming more people into the church

Make stronger and more explicit links between all church activities and the gospel

BONUS POINT

In praise of simplicity

Much of what we do is intellectual but what about those who find thinking difficult?

We need to value people who ask us to speak more plainly

Communicating directly, believing the best and giving up passive communication.

Don't make anything too complicated. Keep everything gospel focussed.

Opportunity on our doorstep

Student Village in area will be a massive opportunity

Of ships and sacred cows

What kind of ship are we? Worship, fellowship, Stewardship etc. A cruise liner – We've come for the ride; A lifeboat – rescue; a fishing boat – fishers of men.

Are we making the best use of the resources we have been given?

Radical stuff

The church needs to go out to the people. Think about what the community needs, Sunday is not necessarily suitable. Cornerstone should be community support outside of the church.

Building relationships

How do we enhance relationships within the core and to the fringes?

We must give others the chance to share their stories.

Valuing each other

Practical training in discipleship – teaching, using gifts, discovering gifts

Developing prayer life could/would boost the mission – looking at the 'Mission Control' box.

Biting off more than we can chew

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few!

We are a very busy church, doing lots of good things, but I think we are spread too thinly in some areas eg. Toddlers – where there are not enough people available to include the proclamation dimension effectively. Should we be doing less, better?

The wisdom to know what activities should continue and what, if any, should stop.

When we start something as a good idea, God may not want it to run long term.

Time/priorities – ideas for "time bank"

How do we keep the momentum/strength?

A final warning

Mission can be costly and uncomfortable – are we ready and do we want it?