

## Vision Sessions – July 2018

Three meetings were held in July 2018 providing an opportunity to hear more about the Vision for St Mary's and to learn about the financial position of the church. Overall about 30 people attended one of the sessions, each of which lasted about an hour.

Each session started with an introduction to the Vision led by David Williams.

- Published a vision document – Vision 2020. Setting out a vision to guide us over the next few years. It is a continuation from the past – particularly the 'Sharing the love of Christ' message at its centre, and the focus on growing our work with children and young people.
- Yet also reflects the growing awareness of being 'missional', which is seen in:
  - Nurture, encouragement and support for people in their faith journey, as they discover God's calling for them in all areas of life (family, friends, work, learning, community).
  - Openness and engagement with our wider community in the use of our buildings and resources.
  - Specific acts of social action and change in response to general concern or in response to specific needs within the wider community.
- Being 'missional' encompasses all of these: it is not just personal evangelism, it is not just more activity in church. It is certainly not about 'doing more'. It is about inculcating an approach where we engage with God, wherever God may be in all that we do. It is set in the context of being Rooted and Fruitful:
  - That our relationship with God lies at the heart of all we do
  - Being grounded in God's love, through word and prayer, which leads to
  - Fruitfulness in joining with God's mission in all areas of our life.

In addition, an overview of the current financial position was provided by Michael Hunt.

- Surpluses in the past have moved to budgeted deficits in the last couple of years, reflecting increased expenditure along with stagnant income. This is a concern but is not an immediate crisis as there is a window of time to review what's needed. Choices may need to be made, but we're not quite there yet (either in a general sense or specifically in relation to children and young people).
- The main areas of expenditure are:
  - Parish share – the amount that is paid to the Diocese to the costs of clergy, housing and Diocesan level support services.

- Giving to charities – the amount the Church intentionally sets aside to give away to good causes.
  - Employees – the cost of employing people for administrative and children’s ministry.
- The significant majority of income comes from planned giving, although this is supplemented by income from the hire of facilities, investment income and general fundraising.

Each session also provided opportunities for questions and comments, which were numerous and varied and included:

- Reviewing the practice of taking a collection at the Sunday morning services.
- Ensuring we respond positively to the new housing developments within the town.
- Recognising changing patterns of volunteering (often for shorter time periods and in more focused areas).
- Questioning whether new approaches might encourage giving – eg online donations, use of card readers.
- Acknowledging that increased planned giving will be difficult to achieve – most people already give in this way.

Two specific issues were raised and on which further clarification was provided. The first was on the process for developing children’s and youth work following the decision not to extend Ryan’s contract. It was confirmed that there is a small group exploring options at present and that they will report back to the PCC in October. It is hoped that a clear view on the way forward, including a timetable for any appointment, would be in place by the end of the calendar year.

The second issue was on the level and use of reserves by the church. It was noted that the church accounts, at first sight, reveal quite significant reserves. However, it was confirmed the majority of these are the value of the church hall and endowments made years ago which cannot be spent, but from which the church uses the income each year. The level of usable reserves at 31 December 2017 was £156,000, which is being reduced by the projected deficit for this year of around £40,000. Under charity commission rules the PCC have set a level of £77,000 that needs to be held in case of unexpected events. As income has reached a plateau and deficits are projected for future years, in order to achieve our vision and mission in the years ahead it is vital that we increase income and operate on an annual break-even basis.