

Mission Action Planning – workshop findings and next steps

All the Mission Action Planning workshops have now been held and the notes for each written up. 68 people in all attended one of the workshops which looked at who and how and what we are now and where we might be going. As mentioned in a previous article in Link we used the 'Seven Marks of a Healthy Church' from the Healthy Churches Handbook by Robert Warren as a starting point for discussion to see how we, as a church, measured up. After discussion each group agreed a score out of 10 for each 'Mark'. The higher the score given the better. Whilst there is absolutely nothing scientific about the scores I thought it would be interesting to see what the score was overall for each category. This could provide an indicator of where we needed to concentrate our improvement efforts.

In rank order with the highest scoring first the Seven Marks are:

Score

- 7.4 Does a few things and does them well** focused rather than frenetic
- 6.5 Makes room for all** being inclusive rather than exclusive.
- 6.2 Operates as a community** rather than functioning as a club or religious organisation
- 5.8 Faces the cost of change and growth** rather than resisting change and avoiding failure
- 5.6 Energised by faith** rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive
- 5.1 Outward-looking focus** with a 'whole life' rather than a 'church life' concern
- 5.0 Seeks to find out what God wants** discerning the Spirit's leaning rather than trying to please everyone

What we do we do well scored the highest followed by making room for all and operating as a community. These can be seen as real strengths. Four of the groups scored 'Faces the cost of change and growth' quite high but one group gave it their lowest score and this pulled down the average. 'Energised by Faith' was perhaps the most difficult category to address. The last two, 'Outward-looking focus' and 'Seek to find out what God wants' were the areas where the groups as a whole felt we were less strong. However, as a whole they are a very positive set of scores with none scoring less than 5.

The Groups looked at what we might do to improve. Reviewing all the suggestions made, they fall into ten groups. It is worth noting that the UCC already have a number of initiatives underway which are in line with some of the ideas that came forward.

In no particular order the ten groups are:

- Mapping the skills, competences and links with the local community of St Mary's people and raise the profile of St Mary's within the local community

- A number of suggestions as to how we as a church community might be encouraged and enabled to develop our faith; house groups; bible study groups; promotion of Bible reading notes
- Exploring opportunities for working with other churches in Rickmansworth
- Welcoming and encouraging the greater use of the church and the church centre by community organisations to help foster stronger relationships with the wider community
- Clarifying and reviewing the relationship of the church community (as opposed to the clergy) with St Mary's School
- Maintaining and developing the social side of the church community to enable people to get to know each other better
- Establishing a way for the congregation to provide feedback, comments and ideas to the leadership team.
- Improve communications and review 'welcome' arrangements
- The need for a major outward looking project/event
- Discussions around the content and length of the 10am Sunday Service – relating particularly to how the service might be kept to about an hour in length.

For the Mission Action Plan it is suggested that we look to progress at least one action under each of the Living God's Love themes – Transforming Communities, Making New Disciples and Going Deeper into God linked to the workshop findings and priorities..

Initial ideas under Transforming Communities include undertaking an audit of skills, competences and links with the community and exploring links with St Mary's School; for Making New Disciples looking at the whole issue of 'Welcome', producing a church newsletter and delivered to every house in the parish two/three times a year and engaging more specifically as a church in community events such as Ricky Week and Starlight Evening. For Going Deeper into God establishing a teaching course on prayer and offering a course on Leadership of small groups are possibilities. Recommendations will be made to the next UCC meeting on Monday 19th March.