

1. Meeting of parishioners to elect the church wardens.
2. APCM.
3. Renewal of the electoral roll / remembering members who have died.
4. Trustees report –
 - a. my pastoral care blunder! (for those reading this note on the website – I neglected to put this years report in the trustees report, leaving last years in, instead)
5. Safeguarding
 - a. Becky's report
6. Election to the deanery synod
7. Election to the PCC
8. Finances
 - a. Michelle
 - b.

For those new to church since the last APCM – finance was a major topic. I set out a simple guideline as our approach to handling income at the church.

We would take the parish share (what we pay to the Diocese) as a guideline. Over time I would hope our income will grow so that the PS will only be 1/3 of the budget. We will make sure our expenditure will not exceed 1/3 of the budget. The remaining 1/3 will be to support the outreach, community focussed work, the additional things we would love to do to serve the community.

Our first hurdle was to break even. Projected £18-£20k loss – we in fact broke even... The challenge hasn't gone away, this year will also be tight, but we seek to encourage those committed to the

church to give as generously as they can confident we shall be diligent and controlled in our spending.

Bible Reading. (Luke 13:1-9)

This parable is the parable of the second chance.

This fig tree is a bit of a waste of space – it's not doing what fig-trees are supposed to do.

The owner appears to have had enough but the man tending the vineyard is willing to give it a go – water it, fertilize it – give it what it needs. But even he acknowledges, if it still doesn't fruit – then ok – we'll chop it down.

So it's a parable about patience and grace but there's also a threat!! If you go on taking up space and drawing nutrients from the ground and don't bear fruit, I will replace you with one that will. There are other parables along the same lines.

The church – that is the whole church in all its expressions of faith – Anglican, Catholic, Baptist, Pentecostal, free church, Salvation Army...we all share a common mission.

The great commission at the end of Matthew's gospel captures the heart of it.

Go and make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.

The church can look at its mission in two ways. We can look at it like the parable of the King who gives various amounts of money to three people and goes off to another land. On his return two of them have doubled their stake but the third buried the money and simply handed it back. Failed!

If we think that God has left us a mission and has gone off somewhere else in the universe and will one day return to see how we got on – it makes it seem like it's our mission. And what if we fail? What if we bear no fruit? Will he return and chop us down?

But it's not our mission. It's God's mission. That's the way to look at it. Jesus said, surely I will be with you, to the very end of the age. He is with us in the mission.

A quote by Tim Dearborn (from his book "Beyond Duty, a passion for Christ, a heart for mission") has captured the right way to look at mission.

It is not the church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world.

The way God does mission – is to have a church.

The parable would appear to suggest that God is patient and willing to invest in his church that it might bear fruit. Ultimately – if it doesn't...God will replace it with something that does, because if a church isn't bearing fruit...what is it doing?

Earlier I said that the whole church – every expression of church – shares the same mission, God's Mission. The task is to share the good news of Jesus Christ, but we express

that mission in very different ways. One church might have a strong choral tradition and the worship led by the youth choir, adult choir, combined choirs is a central part of what they do.

Others are very much more community minded and it's much less about Sunday worship. My friend at the Salvation Army ran an allotment, café, after school club and a foodbank. There was no choral tradition – but they had a cracking silver band.

You are probably as familiar with all the variety of churches as I am, each in their own way responding to the mission of God although some appear to give it a very low priority.

A good number of years ago now the new thing was fresh expressions of church. New ways of doing church.

I went on a one day clergy event exploring fresh expressions of being church. I came away with one overriding impression. Well- that was obvious.

The theory was that the church needed to be very much more inventive in reaching the community and sharing the good news. If people weren't coming to church – the church needed to go to the people.

Three examples.

One church faced onto the market square in a bustling market town. They had a decent courtyard and kept finding inebriated people hanging about. The PCC were thinking of erecting a high railings around the courtyard to shut them all out. Wiser heads prevailed. They opened a café. They installed a kitchen and café space at the back

of the church and converted the courtyard to be the open café space. It proved a spectacular hit. They engaged with hundreds of local people and alongside all the activity could minister to the needs of all who came, including the souls who permanently seemed to have a can of lager in their hand. Compassion, grace, welcome...and the church grew.

Listening to this I thought – well that seemed obvious to do that, there.

The second church was a new build modern building bang in the middle of a large sprawling estate. It was near the green at the centre, large expanse of grass – a small playground on the edge, you can picture it.

There were lots and lots of children hanging about and getting into mischief. They were bored, there was nothing to do. Very few residents and children came to church.

So they started a football club.

They ran lots of teams. Teams for different ages, teams for boys and teams for girls, and to be in the teams involved discipline one of which was that they weren't in trouble with the law.

It worked spectacularly. And the church never hid its faith. Praying before a match was normal. The church grew. Lives were changed. Trouble on the estate dropped.

Listening to this I thought – well that seems obvious, to do that, there.

Third church, my friends the Revd Dr. Andy Lord. If you travel up the M1 far enough you will pass Trowell services. Near Trowell Village, where the church is St.Helen's.

Andy noticed that quite a few local people came to tend graves and were interested in looking after the graveyard. A Thursday seemed quite popular. So Andy started making sure he was around church on Thursday mornings, opened the church and put the kettle on.

Without any real effort other than being there, more people made Thursday their graveyard visit day and the habit of coming into church for a coffee grew.

And one day the conversation got round to someone recently bereaved and they were sitting in church having a coffee and someone said, can you say a prayer for them Revd. Andy. So he did.

When I last heard, the Thursday group were having a short bible reflection and prayer with their coffee although they would say their principle reason for coming was to look after the graveyard.

And this is a "fresh expression of church"...although I think – well yes...but that's so obvious. It needed Andy to spot where God was, what God was doing, and join in.

The experience of this church has shown that where you have spaces to run things, a kitchen and a café, in this parish church and in this community, it's a catalyst for being the community hub and finding yourself in a position to offer loving service, share joyful hope, to live the faith. If you run a Pilates class and a coffee shop, it's not surprising to have people using the coffee shop before or after.

The churches in my three stories used their location, their premises, their observation at what was happening

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and responded with generosity and welcome within whatever capacity they had.

And this church did the same...until it no longer had the building. And the church discovered you can't really do all those things if you don't have the right spaces.

To be the community hub, to have the capacity to respond to the needs of young people, older people and everyone in between, we need to address the spaces, the kitchen, the café.
I don't have to tell you this as if it's new....you have told me this in the profile written for Holy Trinity and in many conversations since.

What we do on Sundays is very very important...but it can never be the whole of what we do to respond to the mission of God.

Back in 2014 the plan was launched to create the spaces needed, the community room, the kitchen and café and so on – alongside, renewal of the interior of the church. Planning permission was gained...but the project got no further. One key element was it seemed too much to do all at the same time.

So starting with the wardens and PCC, we have begun a conversation to look again. To facilitate this we have invited an architect called Mark to come and look with fresh eyes at existing plans, to listen again to what is being said and to offer advice on how we might approach this one step at a time, one aspect of this at a time.

Katherine and I have known Mark a very long time and he is a deeply committed Christian and as an architect

serves as a volunteer on the DAC in the local Diocese even though he is actually URC.

Mark was here on Monday and Tuesday and I gave the poor fellow little rest. The most fun part was watching him fly his drone around the site filming the church, taking photographs.

He has already had some innovative and new ideas about what might be done and has gone to write his report and knowing Mark, do some sketches and diagrams. This will come back to the PCC and the conversation will go on. At the earliest opportunity, as soon as the PCC wish to, we will engage the whole church community in the conversation...I'm not seeking to be mysterious or cloak and dagger, but neither do I want to ignore the important role the Wardens and PCC have as your elected representatives.

We need to dig around the tree, water and fertilise it in order to be more fruitful.

If we do that thinking there is a threat hanging over us, we will be working with the wrong impression. The point is that God WANTS his church to flourish and will find those who long to see his Kingdom come to bless them. We are a church that bears fruit...but there's more we can do.

If we keep uppermost that the mission is people and don't become overly distracted with practicalities, we'll stay on the right lines.

Undergirding every aspect of this is prayer. We pray four morning a week in church, we have the monthly evening prayer and we invite everyone to pray for

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wisdom, discernment, creativity and, of course, the finances to do the work. (Ascension)

We shall apply for grants, but the finance will also need to come from us IF, together, we believe this is what we should do. I think it's right which is why I've titled the whole project, Transforming Trinity, one step at a time.

We are not re-doing all the research and surveys and preparatory work, but we are re-visiting design and outcome.

The first step starts in the PCC – we made the start.

The second was the consultation, we've done that.

The next will be the report and discussion about that.

The journey is well under way.