

1. 'TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS'

The journey so far ...

- Possibilities for the future

Tonight I want to take you on a journey

- A journey that began in 2016
- A journey that prepared the church for its 175th Anniversary
- A journey that is looking to the future
- A journey that is not yet complete
- A journey of possibilities

And I want to stress the word **possibilities**,

NOTHING has been decided,

NO decisions have been taken as this has to be a journey that is right not only for Holy Trinity Church but also for the community of Crockham Hill.

2. Preparing for the 175th Anniversary

- Re-decoration, lighting and sound
- Churchyard extension
- New Path and approach yews
- Meeting in the school

The PCC wanted to get the church and the churchyard into the best possible order, to be the best that it could be for the 175th Anniversary of the church last year.

BUT we were very aware that we needed to look beyond 2017 and into the future, we needed to begin to explore how Holy Trinity could best serve God's Mission to our community for the future, we needed to explore how best we could help God's love to continue to flow out into our village and beyond.

PCC set up a working group to begin to look at some possibilities in parallel with the planning –

- For the church to be redecorated and re-lit
- For the sound system to be up-graded
- For the main path to be made safer
- For the approach yews to be cut back
- And to get the churchyard extension ready for consecration

Many of you were part of making this happen, but a special thank you to a special lady who spent many hours preparing all the necessary paper work for the permissions to be granted by the Diocese, a task that needed much resilience and patience – thank you Trish!

The church was closed for several Sundays and we decamped to the school.

And eventually it was great to be back!

3. The Options Study – why?

Archbishop William Temple famously said –

“The Church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members.”

The Working Group began to meet using the vision statement from the Parish Profile that recruited me as its initial guide.

Referred to in letter sent out in January.

In December 2016 the Working Group recommended to the PCC that an Options Study be commissioned through Church Projects Ltd.

This was agreed and funded by generous donations to the church, and so the next part of the journey began.

4. The Options Study – the brief

“CPL Chartered Architects, specialist church architects, were appointed by the PCC to explore ways in which the building could be made more attractive to both existing and potential church members.” (The Church Brief 3.08)

Many of you met with Derek Kemp the consultant from CPL.

Derek also met with folk outside of Holy Trinity –

- the Head Teacher from the school,
- Geraldine from Felicity’s,
- Dawn from the pub
- some who are involved with Sunday Club or part of Messy Church.

Derek also had the ‘feedback’ forms from our time worshipping in the school.

Then things went quiet as we awaited the report which was presented to the PCC last June.

5. The Options Study – The Report

Some key issues were identified –

- Poor provision for children, poor disability access
- No quiet space for a minister to prepare for worship
- The separation of congregation and clergy by the screen
- And the choir area being unsatisfactory for larger productions such as the 9 Lessons

Along with these key issues some possible plans were offered.

6. Options to consider

Variations on –

- Building a room on the north side of the church to accommodate a meeting room/children's space/disabled access toilet
- Reordering the back of the church to accommodate a kitchen area, using the current vestry as a room, and the tower as a vestry
- Reordering the back to accommodate a dedicated area for children with a gallery over for extra space
- Moving, not removing the screen to the rear of the church
- Re-siting the font to give better access to the current toilet

7. More options to consider

None of this looked at what might create more flexible space in the chancel area or indeed in the body of the church so CPL were asked to look at further possibilities. They gave some ideas for opening up the chancel area and the possibility of removing the pews.

The Wardens joined the Working Group, discussions went on in PCC and a questionnaire was sent to all school families.

By now we knew that we needed as a leadership to spend quality time not only on possible changes to the building, but more importantly in prayerfully seeking God's voice for his Mission through us here at Holy Trinity,

We arranged to go away for a day at the beginning of February and just before that I wrote to everyone who had met with Derek Kemp to update and inform on progress,

8. PCC Away Day

The PCC spent a day at Christchurch Southborough with Rev Mark Barker, Vicar of St Stephen's Tonbridge and Rev Miriam his wife who is a community chaplain.

This was a day seeking a renewed vision for Holy Trinity, the one from 2013 needed to be refined and own by the 2018 leadership of the church.

We looked at our identity –

Who we are –

- The Anglican Parish Church of Crockham Hill
- A church for the whole community

9. PCC Away Day

Our Purpose ... why do we exist?

- To worship God
- To share the love of Jesus
- To grow as disciples
- To bless the community

10. PCC Away Day

Our vision is to be –

- Christ Centred
- Community Focused

Finally we did some 'blue sky' thinking and came to the conclusion that –

- No change is NOT an option, if we are to seek to fulfil our purpose and our vision.

11. No change is NOT an option

Alongside the work we have been doing here in the Parish, last autumn the Diocese launched its own 5 year strategy 'Called Together'

In many ways we are a good 'fit' to Diocesan thinking.

Our thinking here is developing along similar lines!

Called together – grow, enrich, resource

- We are called to grow in our discipleship
- We are called to enrich our community
- We are called to seek to provide the resources needed to do this

12. No change is NOT an option

At the same time the Tonbridge Deanery is reviewing the future shape of ministry in the rural parishes –

Edenbridge	Crockham Hill	Four Elms
Hever	Mark Beech	Leigh
Penshurst	Fordcombe	Chiddingstone
Chiddingstone Causeway		

All the existing clergy retire within the next 5 years, so we now have –

- An opportunity for change
- An opportunity for growth
- An opportunity for mission

13. No change is NOT an option

At our last PCC meeting we agreed that before going any further we needed to see if any of the possibilities that we had agreed to explore could be even a possibility.

What is known as a 'Statement of Need' was sent to the Diocesan Advisory Committee to seek advice on some possibilities that might help us better live out our vision to be, Christ Centred and Community Focused –

- A new room or re-ordering at the back

- Moving the screen
- Moving the font
- Re-ordering the chancel
- Removing Pews

Not a wish list, not a 'we want to' list, but a 'would any of these ideas be even feasible?' list.

14. Preparing for change ...

Along with this we looked at some possible short term actions –

- To move Sunday Club to the vestry – not ideal, but better than being in the Tower
- To investigate changing facilities for the toilet
- To explore resurfacing the disabled access path to make it easier for wheelchairs and buggies
- And after the very cold winter to review our heating system.

15. The Way Forward

Last week we had a very good meeting with the Archdeacon and members of the DAC, the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

They offered some new thoughts and suggestions and now we await their report following their meeting next month.

Meanwhile we are consulting with you the church family -

- as we prioritise and plan
- as we prepare for the future
- but most importantly as we need to PRAY as individuals and as a church.

From now until the end of May, Evening Prayer on a Wednesday – the time of intercession – will be dedicated to 'The Way Ahead' and as always there is an open invitation for you to join me in the church.

Other times of prayer will also be planned.

16. The way forward ...

“The Christ of tomorrow never allows us to stay still for long, never allows our tent pegs to be hammered home.” (Bishop Morris Maddocks)

Change is coming –

– and these are not worrying times – these are exciting times!

The reading we began tonight’s meeting [Genesis 12. 1-8] anchored our away day thinking in the Bible.

Terah, Abraham’s father left Ur to go to the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran they settled there. Eventually he died there, while Abraham his son continued to follow God’s call ‘to the land I will show you’, to the land where he would become a great nation and a blessing.

This picture, taken last week, shows one of the old apple trees at Malling Abbey. The tree is bursting with new growth. I pray that is a picture of our future, a future bursting with growth.

We have before an amazing opportunity –

- the opportunity to build of 175 years of God’s mission through Holy Trinity,
- the opportunity to be a blessing
- and to be blessed
- that is, if we are willing pull up our tent pegs and look to the future.

Remember we are on a journey, and –

- “The Christ of tomorrow never allows us to stay still for long, never allows our tent pegs to be hammered home.”

I am happy to answer any questions and I appreciate that many of you will want to take time to respond to all you have heard, but can I ask that when you do, it is to me as vicar that you write or speak and not to the wardens or individual members of the PCC, and can I ask for responses by the end of May.