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## "LET'S TALK" RESPONSE FROM ST MARY'S CHURCH, FERNDOWN

### 1. What is the 'Personality and Character' of your local church?

- A loving and welcoming parish church shaped by an evangelical and charismatic ethos.
- A church that is easy to become part of, where people are challenged to worship, grow and serve in response to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

### 2. What are the priorities of your local church?

Re-stating our Vision and giving some flesh on the bones will hopefully be the most helpful way of explaining our priorities. We aim to:-

## **TRANSFORM FERNDOWN WITH JESUS** through every church member:

### **Being Rooted in Jesus**

- **Through regular worship**
  - Currently there are 3 congregations that meet on a Sunday at 9am, 10.45am & 7pm respectively. There is also a congregation which meets weekly for Holy Communion on a Thursday. Worship is also included in our weekly social lunch club (Open Doors) and in our midweek and Sunday children's and youth groups.
- **Being committed to private prayer and reading the Bible**
  - Prayer ministry is offered at all of our services and members are encouraged to pray for each other in their small groups. A "Prayer Focus" is published in our weekly welcome sheet and monthly newsletter. There is also the St Mary's Prayerlink e-mail network.
  - All members are encouraged to read the Bible regularly through the provision of free Bible reading plans, weekly small group Bible study notes, resources available on our bookstall and subscriptions to Bible reading notes from Scripture Union and CWR.

### **Growing up to Maturity like Jesus**

- **By belonging to a small group for mutual support and the discipleship of one another**
  - Members are actively encouraged to join small groups. We currently have 25 groups which meet throughout the week. Study notes are provided to accompany the Sunday morning teaching. Small Groups are also actively involved in church ministries and in pastoral care of one another.
  - We hold an annual "home grown" discipleship course called "Fully Alive" which encourages church members to grow spiritually and to serve God at home, in work, community and church.
  - An annual Stewardship Campaign and 6 month reminder on sacrificial giving is integral to the spiritual growth of the Church.

- **By serving God with the gifts he has given us, at home, work, church and in the community**
  - Through Sunday sermons and the discipleship course we encourage members to discern their gifts and consider how to use them to bless those around them in all areas of life.
  - St Mary's strives to be an "every member ministry" church where all members are encouraged to be involved in active Christian service.

## Reaching Out with Jesus

- **By creating a Christian place of belonging in Ferndown**
  - We place high importance on welcome and hospitality, acknowledging that we only get one opportunity to make a positive first impression. Welcome suppers and events happen every term.
  - We hold termly bring and share suppers or similar events to provide occasions for the whole church family to come together for worship, food and fellowship.
- **By developing outreach that will ultimately lead people to faith in Jesus**
  - Our Outreach Team meet termly to discuss outreach opportunities and events, using the "sowing 1,2,3 and reaping" concept as taught by Lawrence Singlehurst.
  - The Alpha Course is run at least once a year, each time a number of candidates come to faith, join small groups, attend worship regularly and come to baptism and confirmation.
  - Our Men's Ministry and Women's Ministry Teams organize a variety of events to help engage non-Christians and encourage those who already believe.
- **By developing our buildings to aid our church vision**
  - We have recently sent in a planning application for "The Beacon Project" which will see the development of our current hall buildings which adjoin the church. The vision for The Beacon Project is to create a place of welcome and belonging for all in Ferndown. We aim to extend our current buildings and grounds to make St Mary's more accessible and thereby benefit all members of the local community. The project includes the building of a church lounge with hot drinks facilities to serve as a community meeting place and to link our church and hall buildings together. We are also looking to create a new reception area, extend our current rooms to accommodate existing activities better and to encourage new ones, and to landscape our grounds.
- **By actively supporting wider mission in the UK and around the World**
  - 10% of church giving goes directly to support mission activity outside of Ferndown. 90% of this total is channelled to the main 5 organizations we support which are:
    - CARE (Christian Research & Education)
    - The Bible Society
    - CPAS (The Church Pastoral Aid Society)
    - Rev. Stephen Bell with ECM (European Christian Mission) in the Balkans
    - Simon & Sue Morgan (St Mary's church members) with Mission Direct in Uganda

The remaining 10% is used for gifts to church members going on short term mission trips or other one-off gifts to other mission needs outside of the parish. A number of church members of all ages have gone on short term mission trips to Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Uganda and Malawi.

  - Offerings at all seasonal services are donated to mission organizations and every Christmas we support Operation Christmas Child (Samaritan's Purse) by donating shoeboxes.

**3. Is there one thing you would like to take on in the coming year (recognising that may mean you may need to stop doing something else)?**

- The launch of a 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Congregation – “Breakfast Church” - to reach out to those on the fringe who are looking for a different service to those we hold currently. (E.g. present church members and new baptism families looking for an earlier service, wedding couples & other newcomers looking for a more informal service). We are conscious of the additional resources that this will entail but we hope to recruit new volunteers following the completion of our current discipleship course in order to facilitate all of our church service and outreach activities.

**4. Are there ways in which we can work together to achieve more?**

- Smaller parishes could share resources (shared websites, admin resources, buildings etc.)
- Larger parishes could be freed to grow and church plant into other parishes
- Sharing of best practice
  - A facility on the Diocesan website or a monthly e-mail for ministry leaders to share their specialized knowledge, experience and resources (E.g. Document templates, reviews of church specific software, links to helpful resources).

**5. How can we best measure the quality and impact of church life?**

This is almost impossible to quantify, and we are not sure attempts to do so will always be accurate or helpful, so we offer these thoughts very tentatively.

- Quality - People being transformed by Jesus, built up in faith, and sent out to serve Jesus in whatever setting they are in.
- Impact - The Kingdom advances in Ferndown and the Church grows in depth and numbers. The Spiritual atmosphere of the town becomes more Godly.

The quality and impact of church life can be partially measured by:

- The extent of involvement of church members in small groups, discipleship courses, ministry and outreach activities in the church & community.
- The fruits of the church "living out" their faith - transformed relationships at work, home and church, more new people coming to Christ and to church as a result of their witness.
- The church being known in its community for the love that is shown to all and shared by all - "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13: 34-35)

**THANK YOU**

Thank you for the opportunity to look at these matters, which we found helped clarify our vision and aspirations under God. If anything needs clarifying please do come back to us.

**Rev. Martin Howard (Rector)      April 2013**  
St Mary's Church, Ferndown

*(In consultation with the Standing Committee of the PCC after initial PCC discussions in January)*