



Have we hit a wall?



We rejoice and give thanks to God for many exciting new developments in our churches. In Saint Paul's we have been stimulated by our monthly series of Evensong with Discussion, and grown in fellowship through our Wednesday Coffee, Chat and Cake; in Holy Trinity we have blessed the community of North Bushey with Hot Chocolates, Family Films and Tiddlers; in Saint James's our pre-school and primary school aged worshippers have joined together for fun in Fireworks, and a number of adult members (new and more established) have grown together in faith in *Pilgrim* discipleship groups; parish-wide we have been supporting those most in need through our Pastoral Visitors scheme. However, there is much work still to do.

Why debate this at PCC?

*The functions of parochial church councils shall include— (a)co-operation with the [F2minister] in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical; **The PCC has responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the parish as much as the financial and structural.***

When Jesus met with his disciples and commanded them to 'make disciples of all nations', he didn't ask an individual to do so; he commanded it of his whole group. As followers of Jesus, we are called to work together on that task with a shared vision of God's Kingdom.

Our Parish Profile (the document that recruited the current Rector!) recognised that fact, and stated that we wanted to **work together to achieve a shared vision**; but how much time was invested in talking and working through the implications of that statement? Has this been imposed or desired?

There are some deep-rooted relational issues which, we would argue, suggest that the *trust required to work towards a shared vision for God's Kingdom in Bushey is absent*. Old wounds and negative attitudes are preventing us from trusting each other to move forward as we ought.

This is evidenced at

- St. Paul's (among *some*) by regular criticisms of the past, and comments made to new people that they belong to SP and not to SJ or the parish; in short, a general unwillingness to move on
- St. James's (among *some*) by the way new people, and their gifts and skills are not welcomed by all (and not welcomed by some who are part of the SJ 'officials')
- at Holy Trinity (among *some*) by unwillingness to enthusiastically embrace the change and 'new models' required to move on.

In all of the above we emphasise that this is among *some*, *not all*; but these are considerable areas of concern.

There is no evidence to suggest that relational structures have been put in place following past conflicts in the history of the Parish to ensure they are not repeated – resulting in many issues being allowed to be hidden or kept out of the light.

All this said, it's really heartening to know that some of our newer members are completely unaware of some of these issues!

We need to do some Spiritual team building

In the modern workplace, Team Building is not an option. If we seek to grow and build ourselves spiritually as disciples of Christ, we will not lose those who are committed to working together and moving forward. We may, however, lose those who wish to stay territorial and work in isolation. These two opposing approaches cannot exist in tandem without perpetuating some of the deep-seated problems we are already aware of.

We need a Strategic Plan to do so

We need to ensure that the PCC who, with the Rector and Parish Wardens, *share in the responsibility for the whole of parish life (financial, spiritual and material)* feel confident that we are addressing these issues with a view to a line being drawn under them in order to allow old hurts and bad experiences to be healed and laid to rest.



What would this look like?

Spiritual Team Building (aka discipleship) would be the default position of each of the committees and Churches.

Without an intentional investment in this area, 'shared vision' will always be assumed and never articulated.

- Each committee would meet monthly (ten times a year) for two hours; with an hour of each meeting given to discipleship, learning and praying together.
- There would be a clear expectation of those in leadership and all positions of responsibility (organist & choirmaster, leader those leading Tiddlers/Youth Clubs/Tots' Praise and other children's work, team leader of church flower arrangers, tower captain etc) to actively engage with the worship and life of the Parish as a disciple of Christ, by, for example, regularly attending worship and participating in some of the Life Groups, Discipleship or Study Groups we run.
- We would seek Spiritual healing for past hurt – for example, Prayers for healing and deliverance for and in Church House, where much hurt and discontent has been focussed in the past and still is.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:5

We would choose to live like the Early Church, trusting each other to share resources – financial and other.

A reluctance to financially share our resources is a key indicator of the lack of trust between many in our three churches. We cannot set out on a course to share human resources in a more generous way when at the same time we are expending energy protecting our financial resources. By being willing to embrace a new way of operating financially, we are demonstrating our trust for each other and are showing that we, as a PCC, are serious about investing in a new culture and season.

We therefore propose that the decision is taken now that by the financial Year 2017 all CMF, income and expenditure will be centralised. Martin Luther speaks of the three conversions that are needed; the head, the heart and the wallet, the wallet or purse often being the last to be converted

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

Acts 4

We're only human, after all...

We are all human – clergy are more human than you might think! We do not always behave perfectly, we make mistakes and we get things wrong. That's why we need God as, left to our own devices, we stumble and fall. It is God's love, revealed in Christ, that enables us to be people who are "ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven." We will find ourselves in conversations where natural debate can so easily merge into character assassination, or ill-founded gossip. As elected leaders of the community (which as PCC members and church committee members, we are) we must make a commitment to gently challenge such negative behaviour wherever we find it happening. In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul urges us to correct or rebuke people as much as encourage them. And it is all to be done in love, and with love, for their ultimate good. Being a committee member is a privilege and responsibility and we need to always strive to be part of a solution, not part of a problem.

It is also essential that all who serve on our PCCs and committees are regular members of Sunday worship – it is a living out of one of the Ten Commandments – Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy (Exodus 20). (Also, being a regular worshipper is the first qualification for eligibility on the Church Electoral Roll.)

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction
2 Timothy 4:2

What if this doesn't work?

If the holistic approach to working more collaboratively together is still compromised by lack of support and shared vision at committee level, then the PCC, as the body corporate legally responsible for the spiritual well-being and future of the parish, *may* have to set the course ahead in some areas of church life. We sincerely hope that this is not required.

However, as PCC members we are fully aware of our responsibility and if there is a need for one particular committee or area of church to function in a healthier way, then groups and committees may cease to function *in their current form* and the PCC may need to suggest a particular strategy to help things to move forward. This would only be done if we felt this was the most helpful way to find a new direction to enable the parish as whole to continue to move forward in a positive way.



We would seek to demonstrate our faith in working together as one People of Christ by working together in all our activities

No one is excluded. *The opportunities for service remain; however we strongly commit to collaboration and team work at every level of governance and every parish function, group and event. We commit to putting into place strategies which help us to play to our strengths and give us the opportunity to witness to (and serve) Jesus at every opportunity.*

The Road to Forgiveness, Grace and Healing

During **Lent 2016** we will have a series of sermons exploring the dynamics at work where forgiveness and healing are needed and are absent. Topics for these sermons will be:

- **Speak Forgiveness to Me**
- **Forgiveness or Death**
- **Start Again**
- **Damn Them All**
- **I can't Forgive**
- **Sharing in the Life**

What prevents us from moving on? What are the hurts and burdens we carry? How do we feel when we forgive and are forgiven? What happens to our souls when we harbour resentments and ill feelings?

During **Holy Week 2016** we will welcome a guest preacher, **Canon Paul Nener**, a retired priest living in the Diocese of Liverpool. For many years Fr. Paul was Sub-Warden of the Guild of St. Raphael*. He was a doctor for twelve years before ordination. He was a member of the Bishop of Chelmsford's Review Group that produced *A Time to Heal*. Before his retirement he created a Healthy Living Centre next to his Church. Now he is available to act as a roving ambassador for the Guild and for the Healing Ministry.



** The Guild of St Raphael exists to draw attention to Christ's ministry of healing, which is healing in its widest sense. As an association of ordinary Christian people, the Guild and its members cannot "wave a magic wand" to bring about symptomatic relief. But what we can do is to pray for Our Lord's gift of wholeness and healing on behalf of those who need it.*

As part of our Holy Week liturgies there will be an opportunity for us to write down the hurts we carry across our congregations, and have carried for years, and to lay them at the foot of the Cross. These will be added to the bonfire on Holy Saturday as we celebrate the new life of the Risen Christ.

From one of Canon Nener's addresses at a conference on healing.....

Do we all really want to be healed? Do we want to move on more deeply in the Christian life? Are we unable to forgive others and find Christ in them? Do we all want to be healed or are we holding back because we have the security of self-sufficiency, of self-righteousness, of religious certainty? Even worse do some think that they have no need for forgiveness and conversion?

.....some in the Church who refuse to be healed and take all their hurts out on the Body of Christ, and seriously spoil the evangelistic life of the community.

To read the full sermon see here: <http://www.guild-of-st-raphael.org.uk/121027/AddressByCanonPaul.pdf#zoom=80>

What happens elsewhere?

- What happens when a failing school placed in special measures needs to improve?
- How do businesses turn themselves around when profits are dwindling?
- What do individuals do when past hurts and experiences prevent them from moving on in life?

What we know for sure is that none of the situations above are improved by preserving the *status quo*. These are examples of secular organisations, and we hope we will never find ourselves in those parallel situations. Our work is grounded in the love of Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. This gives us something not found in secular organisations!

With God, all things are possible. Matthew 19:26

What might we lose?

- We may lose those who cannot and will not work as part of a team with others
- We may lose those who wish to live in the past rather than move forward into the future
- We may lose the negative attitudes and constant criticisms which underpin many events and church meetings

What will we gain?

- We will gain more members in leadership roles who are committed to working collaboratively and to embracing wholeheartedly the mission and growth opportunities that lie ahead of us
- We will grow spiritually, numerically and financially
- We will have confidence that all three of our churches have a healthy and bright future, with spiritually fit-for-purpose congregations able to usher in a new generation of disciples

***you cannot change the past, it's gone,
but you can make sure your past does not destroy your future***

Bushey Core Group

All Saints Day 2015

*Almighty and ever living God,
your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ
is the light of the world.
Grant that we your people
may shine with the radiance of His glory,
reflecting your love in our words, actions and thoughts;
so that all may see and believe.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit;
one God, now and forever. Amen*
