

THE PARISH OF **ST. JOHN BAPTIST, BROUGHTON**

Charity Number: 1134595

Jesus said, "I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." John 15.16

We seek to make Jesus known in our community, through our joyful, loving service and worship

Presentation to PCC - 6th October 2018

"Setting the Scene"

Father Shaun Baldwin

Thank you for giving up your time to be here today. Back in January, Ian Cherry gave you the very stark reality check of the state of our parish finances. It left us under no illusion that we as a parish are at a tipping point. Action is needed, and now. If you'd forgotten what Ian said, you will certainly be reminded again when he gives us an updated presentation after lunch.

What we are about to do over the next few hours is crucial to the present and the future of your parish. You will be presented with the outcomes of two major pieces of work that you commissioned in light of the financial report: the Parish Review, which we will look at this morning, and the Options Appraisal, which we will look at this afternoon. We will consider a number of evidence based recommendations, some of which you have already seen in the bundle of documents that were emailed to you earlier in the week. You will be presented with the pros and cons, and the related consequences. After discussion and debate you will be asked to vote on whether or not to adopt the recommendations that are being proposed for the good and future of the parish, its mission and ministry.

Before Ian spoke to us in January I asked you to remove your emotional heads. I reminded you that as members of PCC you are Trustees of a charity - the parish of Broughton St John Baptist - who have legal obligations to ensure the mission of the charity is realised by the best possible management of the charity's assets and finances. This message will be repeated during the day. At the start of this day I issue the same request. Please remove your emotional heads. You represent the parish as a whole. Even though you may have certain interests within the parish, you are not here as their representatives. What we will discuss and debate today is for the benefit of the whole of the parish, as hard as this might appear at times. So, if you feel unable to make that separation, now is the time to leave.

May I begin by thanking Andrea for her professional, prayerful and pastoral leadership of the Parish Review. It has not all been plain sailing! The work of the review groups has been tremendous. So much time has been given to pouring over information, analysing it, debating it, working out how best the parish can serve now and going forward. Thank you to everyone involved.

The Options Appraisal has by its very nature been a highly confidential, but as you will see and hear this afternoon, an incredible amount of work has been undertaken. All of this is to provide you with as much information as possible as you consider the recommendation that will be put to you. At lunchtime we will welcome some of the professionals who have been assisting us, and they will be addressing you this afternoon.

All of this is underpinned by our start point and our end point, which is Jesus Christ. All that we are and do as individual Christians and together as the Body of Christ that we call the parish of Broughton St John Baptist, exists because of and for Jesus Christ. We can't exist to be a self-serving, preference led institution. I'll return to this.

Before his ascension into heaven Jesus commanded his disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 27.18-20).

We exist to ensure that the institution we call our parish carries out Jesus' great commission to the best of our ability, using the resources that are at our disposal in the best possible way.

The gospel reading we heard at Morning Prayer (Luke 9.52-56) should speak loudly today. We heard twice that Jesus' face was "set toward Jerusalem". Another translation puts it this way: Jesus "resolutely took the road to Jerusalem."

Resolutely. A word that speaks of an absolute determination to get to where you want to get to, despite any obstacles that might get in your way.

For Jesus, the journey to Jerusalem led to Calvary, but it didn't not on Calvary, rather in the empty tomb, and the resurrection. Jesus was determined to do the will of his Father, for the sake of the whole of humanity, despite all the obstacles that he encountered along the way. He was resolute, determined. His face was set. He was resolute in his mission to do his Father's work.

I remain absolutely convinced that the Holy Spirit has guided us to this point at this time. I pray that today and going forward, we as a PCC will be resolute in taking forward our vision and mission. We are commissioned to do God's work to make Jesus Christ known and loved through the mission and ministry of our parish, and we do so knowing that Jesus is with us always.

Our vision for the parish is expressed succinctly in the Mission Statement that you adopted in 2016. Called by Jesus to bear fruit that will last, and make Jesus known in our community, through our joyful, loving service and worship. That's why we exist, and not to prop up an institution for its own ends or be self-serving.

How do we make our vision a reality? By our personal commitment, prayer and example, and in a wider scope through our collective parish prayer, through the way we worship as a community, through the spiritual and pastoral care we offer, through our social outreach, through the way we communicate and live out our vision. All these aspects were, of course, the focal points of the parish review, which asked questions around the what, the why, the when, the who, the where, and the how.

All of this is supported by the wider Diocesan Vision: to be witnesses of Jesus, to make new disciples of Jesus, and to grow new leaders for Jesus.

This theological approach has to be supported by a business management approach. I'm so grateful to the many professional people who are bringing their knowledge and skills to the table. Management in a 'secular' field is often very different to one in a religious field, not least as we are usually so dependent upon people who are willing to buy into a vision in order to make it a reality,

as opposed to being paid to deliver it. We're almost entirely dependent upon volunteers - or disciples, as I'd prefer to say - who have to work out what it means to be a Christian, who are trying to live a whole life discipleship, who are juggling the demands of home, work, social and family life, trying to work out where one's faith fits into the priorities of daily life.

And that's where my wider vision for this parish comes in. I believe that we have to become more effective at praying, teaching, feeding, nurturing, enthusing, comforting, supporting, challenging, blessing those who we encounter regularly in our parish, in order that we, the Parish of Broughton St John Baptist, start to become a more visible Body of Christ serving Broughton and Fulwood, a parish who reaches out.

This will enable us to make our vision and mission a living reality: one that makes a difference, one that makes us a healthy church that transforms our community, because we will be living out Jesus' command to make disciples.

I'd like to show you a couple of slides, which explain where I think we are at the moment, and where I'd like to see us moving to:

The Consumer Church: Church is seen as a 'dispenser' of religious goods and services. People come to church to be 'fed', to have their personal needs met through worship and parish events, perhaps have others teach their children about God. And then what?

I'm not saying this model is wrong *per se*. Indeed, if we're honest, it's probably a realistic reflection of where we are as a parish. I acknowledge that we need to be available for people to dip in and out of, and we see this most often through the occasional offices, and at Christmas and Easter. But if this it remains the sole model, then we will face a slow and sustained decline. This is supported by some other reading I came across recently, triggered by a diocesan tweet:

"When a church is driven by member preference, it is headed for decline, then death. The death may be protracted, and the death may be delayed, but it is inevitable. A church cannot survive long-term where members are focussed on their own preferences."

A bit harsh, you may think, but if you're honest, it rings true. The consumer church model has to develop into something deeper, into this:

The Missional Church: A body of people set on mission, who gather in community for worship, community encouragement, are fed and taught by Word and Sacrament, in addition to what they are self-feeding themselves throughout the week. And this is expressed in a whole life discipleship. Which isn't living a holier than thou life, but is simply living and viewing people and life through the lens of Jesus, and by doing so making Jesus present.

My vision for this parish is that we become a visible missional church that lives its mission statement and intentions, supported by our diocesan vision, to be a church that transforms our community. **The movement is from going to church - being that consumer, getting what I want or what I can get - to being a missional church - sharing or giving what I've received.** This is the crux of why we are here today.

Today you'll be given various recommendations to consider and approve. Indeed, you've already seen some of them. I believe that what we are looking at today will enable us to become a more outward looking, visible missional church by the way we pray, worship, care for each other, reach

out to others, communicate to others; driven by a deep love of Jesus and a deep desire to make him known.

It's an interesting observation that there's roughly an 80:20 split in the Parish Survey when people were asked whether or not they would be willing to become involved in various aspects of parish life. The 80 is a 'no' response, the 20 a 'yes'.

Have you heard of the 80:20 Rule? It's named after an Italian economist who observed that 80% of income in Italy was received by 20% of the Italian population.

The assumption is that most of the results in any situation are determined by a small number of causes. It's a model that can be useful for our context. We're already aware that in the parish it's a small group of people who are doing the majority of the work, a small group of people who are the generous givers. One of the issues that we have to address is the age demographic, because that small group of people are not getting younger, and younger folk are not coming forward, despite direct and indirect invitation. This also reflects an overall age demographic that suggests we will be unrecognisable as a parish in 10 years unless we begin to reach out to and attract families and young people.

The 80:20 Rule is simple enough: focus on people and activities that produce the best outcomes for you. The biggest factor that stops most people from chasing their vision and working towards their real goals, is fear. Fear of the lack of security, fear of the unknown, fear about what other people might say or think, fear of being disliked, fear of failure. Such fear keeps people locked into routines that are not life giving, and so contributes to decline. I've read that 'fear not' appears in the Bible 365 times. We might say, therefore, that God says to us each day, 'Fear not'. As Paul reminds us, "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8.31). Please remember: we're in the business of giving life - the life of Christ.

PCC, as we work our way through today's business, we will be presented with some uncomfortable information, but we will also be presented with wonderful things that are happening, and wonderful things that we wish to happen. Today is about helping us to focus our work in order to realise our vision. So please don't let fear be a reason for us not achieving our vision.

Today is an opportunity to stop, look, listen, assess, reassess and make plans to put flesh on the bones of the vision that will drive our mission and ministry. It's an opportunity to recognise what we're good at, to go with the activities that will produce the best results for us, and put our energies where they will produce "fruit that will last." Alongside this, we have to reassess the resources we have at our disposal, and how we will use them to maximise our vision and mission.

Today is about moving forward. Should you approve the recommendations that are being put to you, this will trigger an important new phase: the creation of a much needed Mission Action Plan. This will give us a strategic and coherent parish plan for the next 3-5 years, taking into account and developing the outcomes of the Parish Review, determining the when, where, why and who, and wrapped in the all important question: how. The outcome of this afternoon's Options Appraisal presentations and discussions will be pivotal to delivery of our vision and mission. We will have to prioritise what will produce the best results in the short, medium and long term; for individuals, the parish as a whole, and for the parish's outreach and growth.

