

**DIOCESE OF PETERBOROUGH
WELLINGBOROUGH DEANERY
UNITED BENEFICE OF MEARS ASHBY, HARDWICK, AND
SYWELL CUM OVERSTONE**

We the PCCs of the above Churches agree that as members of the body of Christ in this Benefice and its parishes, we must work closely together to respond to God's call in Ephesians 4: 1-7 to live a life worthy of our calling; being humble and gentle, bearing with one another in love. We are one body, directed by one Spirit and called to one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

We re-commit ourselves as the family of God in this Benefice to pray regularly and seek the help of the Holy Spirit to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone in our villages.

In the light of discussion amongst the PCCs and the Staff Team, it has been agreed that in order to fulfil our Parish Mission Statement, which is to bring the word and love of God to all people in these communities, in the next five years we will undertake the following key steps to further the Mission of God in our Benefice.

- We confirm our belief in the supreme authority of scripture. This means that in the life of the Church we treat the Bible as saying what God says.
- We acknowledge our sinfulness before God and thus we also acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves by anything we do. We acknowledge that we are dependent upon God totally for our salvation.
- We acknowledge that Christ died as our representative, bearing God's judgement on all humanity, thus placating God's wrath against us.
- We acknowledge that we are justified (put right) before God by Christ and by our faith in Him alone.
- We acknowledge that all that are in Christ are born again by the power of the Holy Spirit through the sovereign work of God.

Pastoral Care

For the next five years it is the intention of this Church to take the following steps to increase the level and quality of the pastoral care provided to the people in the Churches.

- Establish a properly rota-ed welcoming team in each church in the benefice.
- Provide an opportunity for prayer after every church service.
- Support newcomers with prayer, friendship and encouragement through a "parenting scheme".
- Offer everyone in the benefice the opportunity to be part of a prayer triplet or adult study group.

Discipleship

It is clear in Matthew 28 that one of the main purposes for the Church is to nurture all who attend in the faith of Christ. It is also clear from 2 Timothy 3 vv 16 and 17 that the main resource we have for growing the Church is the Word of God. During the next five years we intend to take the following steps to ensure that each and every member of the Church of God worshipping with us in the Benefice has every opportunity to move on in their personal walk with God.

- Offer a Christianity Explored course at least twice a year, with personal support from a church member, for all visitors, baptism families, engaged couples and any other church member who has not given their lives to Christ.
- Invite everyone who has attended a Christianity Explored course to a Discipleship Explored course and Home Group.
- Supply personal devotional material and bible studies on a weekly basis via our website.
- Develop further home groups, aiming for seven by 2008; to include provision for men, women, young mums and dads at home caring for children, seniors and teens.

Liturgy and the worshipping life of the Church

We want to change the perception of "church" from being an additional burden in people's busy lives to being an irreplaceable source of love, support, friendship, fulfilment and most importantly, intimacy with our Creator, God. We want everyone to assume their true identity as God's chosen elect.

It has become increasingly clear to the Team that people need to be helped to understand that as they walk forward in their Christian faith it is an intensely emotional experience as they relate to Jesus Christ and the people around them. People need to be assisted to understand that the people with whom they spend most of their time in their walk of life will be the people from whom they take their values, convictions and morals and that therefore the Church can assist them as they walk forward together.

To enable this to happen more effectively, during the next five years we propose:

- Re-write a benefice-wide liturgy for morning worship, holy communion, all-age worship and baptism.
- Re-evaluate the all-age worship service and provide opportunity for all families in the benefice to attend at least once a month.
- Read and unpack the word of God in every service.
- Consider forming by 2009 a group of musicians to lead worship at Sywell and Overstone, encouraging thanksgiving and praise in our liturgy.
- Establish a seeker/welcome service before 2008 away from the Church buildings in our villages, for those with whom we have irregular contact.
- Ensure that every church building is family-friendly and provide children's materials (i.e. book bags and activity bags).
- Our worshipping community is approximately 65-70 adults and 20-30 children. We seek to grow the family of God in this Benefice by an average of 10% per year, or 7 adults and 2 children. By 2010 the congregation should stand at approximately 109 adults and 26 children. We hope and pray that God will indeed bless us more richly, but seek this as a minimum.
- Engage in at least two evangelistic outreach activities every year.

Children's Work

- To appoint and fund a Children's Worker, initially on a half-time basis.
- To emphasise biblical teaching for faith in all children's work, with elements of structure whilst allowing the children to have fun as they learn and grow. This is to be achieved by :
 - Training and support of all children's workers by clergy and the staff team.
 - Releasing those engaged in children's work from other commitments in the life of the Church.
 - Planning clear and regular quality materials for children's work.
- Produce a quality resource leaflet with names, photos and brief descriptions of Sunday group leaders, list of services, suggested prayers, reading lists and support material.
- Provide appropriate pastoral support for families.
- Provide appropriate and properly structured baptism preparation and run social events twice a year for baptism families, with provision for children so that the adults can discuss their promises at baptism for six months afterwards.
- Maintain an appropriate child protection policy, training and checking all who work with children.
- Engage more fully in the possible work within each school in the Benefice, including non-Church schools, and to establish one extra-curricular activity in each school within two years (i.e. lunch club, after-school club, lunchtime chill-out zone).

We will review and adjust this Mission Action Plan every year and take all steps to complete its objectives.

This plan has been adopted by each P.C.C in the benefice and by the benefice council

Dated 8th Jan 2008