

LEATHERHEAD STRATEGY AND MISSION DOCUMENT

In fulfilling its vision of Love, Mission and Care, LMC seeks to build on recent developments to go forward in God's mission.

Worship remains at the heart of our church's life. The minister's Sabbatical encouraged wider participation in worship from the congregation, and this has been maintained with a creativity that has offered both breadth and depth.

The atmosphere on Sunday morning is warm and welcoming, with a real sense of spirituality in which people can have opportunity to enter into a deeper experience of God.

There is a desire among many for that going deeper in faith, and it is hoped that the establishment of two new house groups in May 2008 will help to meet that need.

We are blessed with a building that is in good order and meets most of our needs, and financially we continue to be able to make ends meet.

On the whole the activities that we do provide work well in building fellowship and faith.

We have been able to welcome several new members, most, but not all, Methodist people who have moved into the area. However, our average age continues to rise, and that may begin to impinge on our ability to do the work we believe we are called to do.

Therefore, we cannot afford to be complacent. While, through worship, house groups and occasional teaching series, there are opportunities for members to grow in faith, we need to ensure that our mission looks outwards and we are in a position to invite people into a relationship with God and membership of God's people.

- **Immediate plans**

Given recent developments in worship and house-groups, now is not the time for too many new initiatives.

However, the minister's appointment as Assistant Chair, while meaning he will have less time to spend on LMC, opens up some possibilities, as the District reimburses the Circuit for the time he will spend on District business.

Therefore, subject to Circuit agreement, there are two proposals that issue from this:

1. Family and Children's worker

Given the development of the Holiday Club, and the work at BFree, and given its ecumenical nature, we have been exploring with the other two Covenanting churches

the appointment of a Family and Children's worker for the Covenanting Churches, to co-ordinate the work that already happens and to build on that using the contacts that the churches already have with young families and children. This includes the mother and toddler groups, and crucially, building our relationship with Leatherhead Trinity School.

It is envisaged that this will be a two day a week post. The current proposal is that it will be funded 25% by the Anglicans, 25% by the URC and 50% by the Methodists, but if the other churches cannot manage this, the money coming to us from the District will help to underwrite it.

We believe this area of our work needs someone with particular skills and focus. The 'fringe' that we have, of people who use our buildings and have some relationship with the church, mostly consists of those who come with children, and it is important that we seek to serve their needs, and offer something of God's kingdom to them.

There are also other Christian groups in the town working with children and families, such as B@titude and Leatherhead Life and it is important that we develop good working relationships with them.

2. Office with secretarial help

The proposal here is that we convert the Choir Vestry into an office, which can be a base both for the minister and the Family and Children's worker. It is difficult to work out at this stage exactly how much secretarial help will be needed, but the initial proposal is for 4 hours a week, (2 two-hour sessions), which will both do the minister's business, (filing and e-mail response particularly), but will also facilitate communication throughout the church.

It is hoped that a presence in that room of someone, minister, F&C worker and/or secretary, most mornings, will help to act as a physical focus for the church and help the information flow. It will need a proper phone line and internet access for this to work effectively.

• **Medium Term development**

1. United Evening Praise services

Conversations are underway about the feasibility of a United Evening service, initially on a monthly basis at BFree to build on the success of Triumph, (the monthly youth-led service there). This would take a similar form, but have a more adult message.

It is hoped that the adults who support Triumph would support this giving it a critical mass, and it could be an opportunity to draw in those Christians in Leatherhead who are churchless and looking for a less traditional style, and also to offer something that is less churchy to those on the outside, interested in faith, but finding church difficult.

This would probably happen on the fourth Sunday of the month at 7.00 p.m.

2. New Kitchen

The one area where our building has to be developed if it is to serve the wider community, and also meet our own needs more effectively is the kitchen. This does not meet current Food Hygiene regulations if we were to serve food on a more regular basis, and a better facility would make the hall more attractive to hirers and widen the possibilities of use for the community.

The money for this would have to come from specific fund-raising.

- **Longer term plans**

1. Developing the Local Covenant

Our relationships with the Anglicans and URC locally have been really important in facilitating the development of youth work at BFree and in the developing the Holiday Club and the work that has flowed from that.

The daily prayers are an important part of the life of the ministers and form the foundation for our joint work.

However, as we look to all three churches changing ministers over the next three or four years, we need to be considering how we most effectively use the resources we have between the three churches, in terms of personnel and buildings, so that we can most effectively develop our work and not become inward looking because we have too much to do looking after our own interests.

This involves asking hard questions, e.g.:

How many clergy do we need for Leatherhead?

How many church buildings can we effectively use?

What other workers may we need to employ professionally?

What joint structures do we need to have in place to enable these things to happen?

2. Evangelism

Underlying all we do, there is a challenge.

Can we share the good news of the gospel in ways that encourage people to commit to the way of Jesus and to the Christian community?

We are committed to an inclusive, open understanding of the Christian faith, but that still needs commitment; and if the work of Christian mission in the town and beyond is to continue, new people have to make that commitment so that the Christian community can have the resources to continue God's work.

At LMC we believe we can offer people a faith that is real and ultimately life-changing. We offer it through our love and care, and also through sharing what God in Jesus means to us, and the difference his saving grace makes to our lives, praying that others will discover that for themselves.

We constantly need to be working at how we do that most effectively.