

Looking to the Future: Sunday 21st May 2017

This is how you responded

This exercise was carried out within the context of building a collective understanding of how our fellowship and local area has changed over the years, the implications for Christ Church's mission and the actions required by the Grace of God to fulfil the greater vision.



The first question considered was 'How do you see our local area changing (in any way)?'

You envisaged Purley becoming a popular place to live with a growing and diverse population of young single professionals, families and elderly together with more transient people in need – the homeless, drunks. High housing costs would preclude many

young people and there would be greater divides between rich and poor. Further, more diversity would be evident in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture and socio-economics. This might lead to tension, violence and isolation between different groups.

Small local traders such as butchers and greengrocers will return to fill empty shops left by those closing due to warehouse and internet shopping. A German-style Christmas market will herald in the season, with businesses greeting residents and visitors. There will be job and skills learning opportunities, within a flexible framework.

Purley will become a more urban environment, with higher population density, urban architectural features such as a 17 storey skyscraper, more construction and a faster, busier living pace. There will be less green space, but new play streets will bring together old and young. Infrastructure will need renewing, and parking will be problematic.

Perhaps the most important responses were about community and social interaction where social isolation was seen as a pressing common problem particularly amongst the old and disabled. Busy lives and long working hours would discourage people from engaging in events, resulting in loneliness and a lack of community. Communication difficulties between people of different faiths and culture would exist. New technology and social media will provide a helpline for the elderly and isolated. Further help to build up communities will come from initiatives such as welcoming new neighbours, street parties, and picnics. Most of all there will be "places to meet and do nothing".

Many of these ideas help to highlight areas that may impact on Christ Church and its mission e.g. population growth, isolation, the needs of the homeless . . . leading into question 2.

Question 2 'Thinking about the first question will we need as a church to change? How will we be sharing the Good News and what should the church look like 15 years from now (around 2030)?'

A growing and more diverse population within an urban environment, greater social isolation and lack of community, advances in information technology all indicate the need for new approaches to share the Good News within the future church. The many ideas put forward were imaginative and thought provoking, falling within **Emerging Themes** of communication, care, and church.

Communication: different ways to inform a larger population about the church's message and activities included: external big screens showing live Services, illuminated advertising billboards, community notice boards, and development of 'The Foyer Church'. Information technology might be used to raise the church profile, including an improved and interactive website, with on-line and streamed Services.



There was a widely expressed view that the church needed to 'go out' more e.g. run an Alpha course in a pub, 'do church' outside and on the streets; perhaps even knock on doors. Developing

external relations with the voluntary sector, schools, politicians, and health care organisations would provide opportunities to introduce the church.

Care: growing social isolation would indicate an outreach need to befriend and care for vulnerable groups who are not part of the many existing initiatives within the church. This would need increased voluntary help perhaps involving intergenerational opportunities for young and old. Simply “looking out for each other” gives a great starting point.

The Church, Worship and Services: suggestions centred on more informal worship and having services at different times of day and on different days to meet needs. More generally the point was made that

the church must be relevant to people’s lives. The shopping centre retail model was suggested with “more meetings in the church during the week e.g. sharing of experiences, different topics discussed and more guest speakers”. Church provides an “opportunity to meet different people of different backgrounds – church can welcome and initiate that”. Finally there was an incredibly encouraging message from young people, expressing their wish to serve and to see service to bring about a better world – an aim that is central to the Christian message.

This exercise indicated a positive desire for change which will need resourcing. It calls for prayerful deliberation to determine priorities and to encourage all church members to become involved.

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