

NETWORK

The monthly newsletter of
St Peter de Merton
With
St Cuthbert

December 2011 & January 2012



From the Rectory,

Dear All,

Have you heard about MAP? Mission Action Planning. Every parish in our diocese has been asked to prepare a Plan, by next Easter, for the next few years – a plan that describes its priorities and its passions. By the time you read this, we'll have started to think together about what it is to be 'church.' That's where we have to begin, with our understanding of who we are and what we are about. And then in the New Year, we'll move on to consider how God is calling us to serve the world around us.

We start from a wonderful place. Our Christmas Fayre was a brilliant example of what happens when we work together. So many people were involved in making it the event it was. Not only did we make a lot of money, at least as important was that it showed off our church (building AND people!) as a vibrant, friendly and exciting place to be. Working out our Plan will take some hard work, some discernment and much prayer, but we've started well.

And what of God in all this? Does God have a Mission Action Plan, I wonder? If God does, we are it! Or to be more precise, the body of Christ, the Jesus people, are it. And God's plan is what the author of the Letter to the Hebrews describes so definitively:

'When in times past God spoke to our forefathers, he spoke in many and varied ways... But in this final age, he has spoken to us in his Son.' (Hebrews 1.1-2)

Or, in words familiar to us at this time of year:

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' (John 1.1)

Christmas!

That's God's MAP, isn't it! Incarnation. God-with-us. What a simple plan it is! God's presence. And whatever it is that we decide about our future, surely that has to be the mark of our mission. God's love, hope and faith in action.

What it will be isn't obvious. Financial uncertainty is changing people and their priorities. A report this week has shown a shrinking of compassion, a hardening of hearts, a blame culture that's getting stronger, and a wide choice of scapegoats to make us feel better. None of that is in God's plan! Perfect love casts out fear, our faith tells us. But to be hopeful and open, compassionate and understanding goes against the current grain. We have our work cut out. But then hasn't the church always. Being counter-cultural is our culture!

And how promising was the ground where God decided to make his appearance? Take an unmarried mother, an inn that was full to overflowing, a breezy barn and a collection of smelly shepherds and an angry, insecure dictator, and how far do you expect to go? But out of this strange concoction came – salvation. The most complete Mission Action Plan there could ever be!

It sounds so dry, and yet it's all about how we choose to live out the hope, the joy, the longing and the love that are at the heart of our faith and our human being. Can there be a more exciting, engaging, worthwhile enterprise? Just what our Fayre was to become.

If that's what working together brings, think how much more exciting and engaging is the business of worshipping together. Carols and the Crib Service beckon, with the magic of Midnight, and then the Day itself. All of it brimming with the love of God incarnate. So let's embrace it, enjoy it, celebrate well together, and open our doors and hearts to the world around us, which needs the light of Christ more than ever to penetrate the darkness and austerity of these days.

And may your Christmas be just as full of love, joy and hope as the first one was.

With my love,
Mike

Prayer for the Month

Dear Friends,

It is Advent and we as Christians look forward to the Churches New Year and once again celebrating the birth of our saviour Jesus Christ.

In the town we are urged to shop until we drop, gifts, gifts, gifts. What should be the happiest part of the year becomes a worry, a burden. Too many pressures, too much getting into debt, too many presents people can't afford to give.

If that sounds a bit killjoy, I don't mean it to be. I love the awe and mystery, especially for the little ones as Christmas Eve approaches, but feel sad when the priceless gift of Christ is drowned out by all the secular razz matazz.

So often the real gift of Christ is overlooked – a gift unwrapped, lost amongst the discarded screwed up wrappings on Boxing Day. The gift that can really change our lives, our world, gets lost sight of. We sink back into the mundane instead of really unwrapping the greatest adventure of life. TO BE A PILGRIM:-

Lord, help us to prepare in our hearts for your Nativity, to give time and thought to our spiritual preparation, to receive the greatest gift of all – a life with Christ.

Help us to listen to your promptings, to learn to give freely of our time and talents. To use the gifts unique to us for your glory and in the service of others. To start each day with the resolve to endeavour to make the day better for someone else because of us.

With gratitude, we ask this in your name Oh Lord.

Amen.

With Love
Heather Harris

Mission Action Plan – Some personal thoughts

Our Understanding Of 'Church'

The Greek New Testament word for church is 'ecclesia' which means assembly and St Peter's Church is first and foremost a 'coming together' of people in the name of Christ. As a family, we meet to deepen our understanding and love for God, to put into practice the teaching of Christ as to how to care for others, (whether it is those in our own congregation or those in the wider community) and to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring the good news about Christ to other people through our lives and through our communication with them.

The buildings however have an impact on us as individuals in different ways. Some of us are inspired by the beauty of the church. Some of us are inspired by the thought that Christians have been meeting on this location since the 7th or 8th century and this is evident in the Saxon stonework next to the pulpit and the archway above the organ. Some are inspired by the prayerful atmosphere of the church – it has a quietness that encourages prayer especially if one is able to drop in during the week. Some are inspired by its link with those who have fought in the two World Wars. Others are inspired by the main features of the church such as the altar, the font, the lectern, the pulpit – all of which have a very important purpose in worship. Perhaps we may be inspired in all these ways

As a family we all have gifts to offer and it is perhaps only at the congregational meetings that we realize how much expertise there is and how generous people are in offering their time and

energy to help in the running of the weekly life of the church and the maintenance of the buildings.

One aspect of our church that is the important and unusual is the emphasis on the 'ministry of the people'. We all have a part to play and a responsibility to fulfil. We are all encouraged to play some part in the worship whether it is in leading a non-Eucharistic service, preaching, leading the intercessions, and serving during the Eucharist, giving of the chalice at Communion or welcoming people as they come into the church for the service. In addition, members of the congregation have been involved in the special Advent evening, the Lenten courses and Quiet Evenings. Members have been invited to write the letter in Network alternative months. The concept of the 'ministry of the people' is also seen in the wonderful openness in our congregational meetings and in meetings of the PCC – not evident in many churches that I have known.

The church is now very welcoming and it is a pleasure to hear new members of the congregation saying that they have joined the church because of the friendly atmosphere. We would like to say to newcomers that they are very welcome wherever they stand in faith - as a Christian, a non-Christian or someone who is still searching and questioning. And one way to experience this welcome is to join us for coffee in the Chapter House after the service and to chat to people who have such varied and interesting backgrounds, and are at different stages of the Christian Faith.

Our Understanding Of 'Church and its Purpose'

One of the strengths of the church I feel is the type of 'worship'. While the focal point of worship is the Eucharist, there are other services for people to enjoy. The variety benefits all but it also helps those who have come from different traditions and makes them feel inclusive. Other types of services take place – weddings and baptisms (the latter usually as part of a Sunday service), funerals, services for the Burma Star, Christingle Services, and School Carol Services etc.

I described a church as a 'coming together' of people and apart from worship, there is no better way to see this than in the many activities that take place on the premises of the church or in people's houses. These include the Ministry Group, Bible Study Group, Lenten course, Advent evening, Women's Fellowship, Mother's Union, Modern Mums, Grapevine and Toddlers, Cruse, Education

Group, Doubters Anonymous, St Peter's Choir, Bell Ringing and so many other activities. This gives an opportunity for members of the congregation to play a role in organizing and leading events. There is much to celebrate.

The **development of the St Peter's** as a church during the next five years will be the result on discussions of the MAP committee and the PCC, and discussions in the congregational meetings and even discussions with the other three town churches. Issues that might be discussed fully during the coming weeks are:

- The urgency of the four town parishes to work together so that we can support each other in the future
- The improvement of the way we present ourselves to the outside community and encourage others to come into the church for whatever reason. (This is well underway).
- Related to this is the need to bring in younger couples for worship so that we are a genuine family representing the different generations.
- The need to harness all the gifts of those attending the church.
- The need to involve more people in the work of Care Homes.
- Greater fulfilment of our vision to see St Peter's as the 'ministry of the people'.

We have the financial resources for all this. The only constraint might be time but if the motivation is there, time will be less of an issue.

Accountability and Responsibility

This will ultimately fall upon the PCC but we are all involved in MAP and so there may be discussions in many groups even after the time when the action plan is finalized. However, it is an ongoing process. Everyone can be involved in prayer, and perhaps specific topics for prayer relating to MAP might be included in the notice sheet and even used in the Intercessions, as well as in our daily prayer.

Paul Fricker

St. Peter's Saturday Coffee Shop

It is now two months since our Saturday Coffee Shop re-opened. The changes we have made seem to be working well. What is most encouraging though is that it is supported by the extra volunteers who are giving generously of their time. We are so pleased that it is still being used by a number of our regular customers, some who have been "with us" for many years.

Tied in with the coffee shop time we are now opening the church. What is so encouraging is the fact that each Saturday a number of passers by have entered the church building for a look round and /or to have some refreshment. When chatting to these visitors favourable comments have been made including the following:-

"Often wondered what the church looks like inside". **"Walked past many times and am delighted that we could get in and look around this wonderful building". "Knew this church when I lived in Bedford some years ago so it is good that on this return visit we could come inside"**

When the weather is warm we have served refreshments in the church, but when heating is needed we use the Octagon, more economical on the heating bill. In the church whatever the temperature is welcome candles are lit and appropriated CD music is played.

Thank you to all the volunteers (we can always take extra help) for their help in our re-opening.

Should you be able to come along one Saturday as a customer why not give us a try, your support will be very much appreciated and our coffee, tea, hot chocolate etc. is GOOD.

Ann Dew and Maureen Tompkins

January Film Club Monday 9th January

"Up" Director **Peter Docker**

A feisty septuagenarian teams with a fearless wilderness ranger to do battle with a vicious band of beasts and villains in this computer animated adventure scripted by Pixar veteran Bob Peterson.

Carl Fredrickson is a 78-year old balloon salesman. His entire life Carl has longed to

wander the wilds of South America. Then, one day, the irascible senior citizen shocks his neighbours by tying thousands of balloons to his home and finally taking flight. But Carl isn't alone, because stowed away on his front porch is an excitable 8-year old wilderness explorer named Russell.

English animation. Running Time: 89minutes

Everyone welcome; wine and nibbles will be served with an opportunity to discuss the film afterwards. A contribution to the refreshments will be gratefully received.

The Christmas Fayre 2011

It will live in the memory of all who were part of it (which is most of us!) It was a lot of hard work, sorting, collecting, making, baking, brewing, planning, and advertising.

And none of us knew if anyone would come! It was meant to rain... but it didn't. And people did come – in their throngs, young and old and plenty in between. Our doors were thrown open and the Church welcomed them warmly - Marion's bunting and banner made sure we did - (although those at the forefront in the porch bore the chill of the day.) And everyone had fun! We did, our visitors did. And God smiled. A brilliant day!

And we even made money doing – more than we ever have – nearly £1400.

How to thank everyone? Impossible! Except to say how grateful we are to everyone who was part of it in any way. And especially to Cinta, whose mad idea it was and whose life was not her own for weeks! And her valiant band of helpers – Liz and Anna.

And we learnt some things too, ready for next time!

**With love,
Mike**

December Services

Every Thursday

10.30am Holy Communion (BCP)

Sunday 4th 2nd Sunday of Advent

8.00am Holy Communion

10.15am First Sunday Service

4.00pm Christingle

Sunday 11th 3rd Sunday of Advent

8.00am Holy Communion

10.15am Parish Communion

4.00pm BCP Evensong

Sunday 18th 4th Sunday of Advent

8.00am Holy Communion

10.15am Morning Worship

4.00pm Holy Communion

Saturday 24th Christmas Eve

4.00pm Crib Service

Sunday 25th Christmas Day

8.00am Holy Communion

10.15am Family Communion

DECEMBER CALENDAR

12th Women's Fellowship Christmas Party at 2.30pm in the Chapter House.

Film Club meets at 7.00pm in the Chapter House 'The Navigator'.

15th Advent Group meets at 11.30 am in the Chapter House.

Funeral of Tom Clarke at 2.30pm.

17th Concord Singers Concert at 7.30pm at St Peter's.

19th Bible Study Group meets at the Rectory at 3.30pm.

20th Carol Service at 7.00pm followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the Chapter House.

22nd Advent Group meets at 11.30am in the Chapter House.
Janet and Mike's 'At Home' 3.00pm – 8.00pm.

January Services

Every Thursday

10.30am Holy Communion (BCP)

Sunday 1st New Years Day – the Naming of Jesus

8.00am Holy Communion

10.15am First Sunday Service

Sunday 8th Epiphany

8.00am Holy Communion

10.15am Parish Communion

4.00pm BCP Evensong

Sunday 15th Epiphany 2

8.00am Holy Communion

10.15am Morning Worship

4.00pm Holy Communion with the Laying-on of Hands for Healing

Sunday 22nd Epiphany 3

8.00am Holy Communion

10.15am Morning Worship

6.30pm Service of Unity at Bunyan Meeting

Sunday 29th Presentation of Christ

8.00am Holy Communion

10.15am Family Communion

4.00pm Evensong

JANUARY CALENDAR

9th Film Club meets at 7.00pm in the Chapter House

10th Mapping Group meets at 2.00pm at the Church.

16th Education Group meets at 2.00pm at 73 Bushmead Avenue.

18th Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins

Ministry Group meet at 2.00pm at the Rectory

22nd Service of Unity at Bunyan Meeting at 6.30pm – Preacher: the Bishop of Bedford

Tom Clarke RIP

Tom was a formidable man, as everyone who knew him will tell you. He had honed his personality over the long years of his life, and knew his own mind very well.

As well as being Gwen's faithful companion for almost 70 years, he's also been a good friend to St. Peter's over the years. His story (which he has recorded in wonderful detail) is a remarkable one — as we will doubtless hear at his funeral service. We'll miss him — but none as much as Gwen. We hold her and her family in our prayers.

Funerals

2nd November
Doris Gerlach

14th November
Joyce Webberley
Douglas Keens

29th November
Sheila Parsons

7th December
Edith Blamey

Too many to thank and not Enough Words!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this year's Christmas Fayre. It was great to see the church community working together to make the event such a success. All our donations and efforts preparing food, produce and craft items, alongside the work of those manning stalls, were rewarded with the sight of so many happy faces in the church on that memorable day.

Please, whilst the day is fresh in our minds, would everyone spend a few moments to jot down any thoughts and feedback on any aspects of the Fayre. Any improvements will make our lives easier next time -and also this summer at St. Peters Tide! Give your views to either Mike or Cinta, or place in the Blue Network box at the back of the church.

It should be remembered that much of what we achieved was made possible by the role of local businesses within the parish. Thanks should be given to everyone who generously supported us through advertising and donations to the raffle. Let us continue to support our parish businesses this Christmas and in the New Year.

Local Sponsors

Lingers Butchers Ltd.

1 St. Cuthbert's Street, Bedford, MK40 3JB
Tel: 01234 353390
www.lingersbutchers.com

Lingers Butchers have one of the best reputations in the Bedford area. Not just for the fantastic range and quality of their produce; local and British, but for their friendly, knowledgeable and helpful service. You will also find them in the town on market day.

Look out for the **Lingers** Luxury Christmas Hamper (last order date 18th December) exceptional value and quality.

angels and urchins super shoes for cool kids

45 St Cuthbert's Street Bedford MK40 3JG
www.angelsandurchins.org.uk

angels and urchins is founded on a simple belief – your child's feet matter. Ethical and environmental factors are important to them too, so all of their packaging and promotional material is recyclable and they only work with fair-trade suppliers.

angels and urchins understand how stressful shoe shopping can be and provide arrange of toys and DVD's to keep the kids entertained and free coffee to revive yourself with.

Russo

Hairdressing

*Because if you don't look good,
we don't look good.*

38 St Peter's Street, Bedford
Tel: 01234 342542 or 01234 269475
f.russo@tiscali.co.uk
www.russohairdressing.co.uk

Russo's has been an integral part of St Peter's Street for many years. The stylists offer expert advice which ensures a personal service.

A choice of sandwiches are offered to clients having perms or colours *free of charge* and all prices include refreshments and all products used in the salon; there are absolutely no hidden extras.

Once you have had your hair styled, you can return for a free fringe trim and 30% of is given to models for the junior stylists.

The Blue Glass Independent Wine Merchants

43 St Cuthbert's Street, Bedford MK40 3JG
Tel: 01234 347732 email:
theblueglass@btconnect.com
www.theblueglass.co.uk

The Blue Glass is Bedford's only specialist independent wine merchant offering personally sourced wines from small independent growers, which represent the ever evolving world of wine.

Offering a wide range of services which include gift vouchers and free local delivery; case discounts, sale or return on bulk orders, free glass loan, wedding tastings; private tastings in store or in your home or office and quarterly wine tasting evenings in store.

Modello Bar & Kitchen

St Peter's Street Bedford
www.modellobedford.co.uk

Modello is a new restaurant and bar that has only recently opened in St Peter's Street.

Their Christmas Menu is priced at £12.95 for 2 courses or £16.95 for 3.

Modello also cater for group bookings and parties.

Alamin Indian Cuisine

51/51a Tavistock Street, Bedford MK40 2RF
Tel: 01234 330066/266999
www.alamin-cuisine.co.uk

The **Alamin** boasts an extensive menu to suit all tastes.

The **Alamin** also offer a special banqueting night every Monday and a free local takeaway delivery service.

5th Avenue Hair and Beauty Spa Ltd

9 Howard Street Bedford MK403HS
Telephone 01234 341377
www.5thavenuespa.co.uk

5th Avenue is a place for pampering, with a hairstyling salon and beauty spa.

Pre Christmas Treats include:

Ready Steady Party!

Blow dry or GHD curls & a nail shape and paint to get you glam for your big night out! £29.00 (saving £9.00)

Shop till you drop!

Tired feet and achy back from all that Christmas shopping? Treat yourself to a half hour back and shoulder massage & Jessica Deluxe Pedicure. £43.00 (saving £12.00)

Sincere thanks to all of these businesses who gave so generously.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Network will be back in February 2012.