

Team Meeting 12th May 2008

By our Staff Reporters

PCC members representing All Saints, St Andrews, St Marys, Hertingfordbury, Holy Trinity with St Leonards Bengoe, and Holy Trinity, Hertford Heath plus members of the congregations and the public met on Monday 12th to hear and discuss a presentation by Rev Jo Loveridge, Rev Nick Sharp, Rev Bill Church, Rev Alan Stewart and Rev Robert Thompson on the potential team ministry here in Hertford.

The meeting was led by the Rev Jo Loveridge – Team Rector Designate. Jo welcomed everyone then introduced our clergy who one by one spoke of their Vision for the future of our Churches.

Rev Bill Church. – Anglican Ministry in Hertford

Bill reflected on Hertford in the Past, trying to look "through the eyes of a newcomer" rather than that of a long time resident. He described the town as dividing into four 'Tribes':

- Always been here
- Moving up the Lea Valley
- Came for work or housing, liked it and stayed.
- Just passing through, somewhere to live between commuting.

He reminded us that parish boundaries are an important concept: everyone in England is in a parish and entitled to Christian pastoral care from the Church of England. The Parish system expresses the CofE's ethos of being willing to offer that care.

And, of course, parish boundaries in Hertford have changed many times over the years and mean little on the ground - one goes through the middle of a ex-pub!

Each church has a distinctive set of strengths and weaknesses that attract/deter people from across the whole town – suggesting there is real scope for acting in a concerted fashion where this makes things easier or better.

He stressed that a 'Team' does not guarantee success, but it may establish working together as the norm which it has not always been in the past.

Rev Jo Loveridge - Team

Jo felt we could achieve more together than alone, time to develop together, thinking strategically about growing our churches, pastoral care and outreach. All churches would retain their own identity as a parish; keep their own Priest, PCC and Churchwardens and also the individually calculated parish share.

There would be a Team Council with fair representation from all parishes. It would enable us to have a broader vision (not too parochial in the small sense of the word!) achieving more together than separately, the sum of the parts being greater than the whole, reflecting more truly the Body of Christ.

Jo also told us of her experiences working in a team ministry prior to coming to Hertford and how this developed relationships. As we are here at the very beginning of this process it gives us the ideal opportunity to set the team up as we think will be best for Hertford. She asked us all to join her on this exciting adventure.

Rev Nick Sharp – Evangelism

For Nick, Evangelism is the key challenge. To meet it we must do together those things that we can do better together. He gave an analysis of the population of the country in relation to their interest in Christianity – 10% attend regularly, 10% attend infrequently, 20% are hostile and some 60% are indifferent to us.

He suggested that we put nearly all our efforts into the 10% of people who are closest to us, the ones we think are most likely to respond. That may be sensible, but it means we are fishing in a very small

pool. We're in danger of doing next to nothing to convince the 60% and growing, that Jesus Christ is the answer to all their problems.

Given that these people only come to church for baptisms, weddings and funerals we have to ask what efforts are we making to maximise the number of weddings we do, to maximise the number of baptisms and funerals we do, and to make them occasions when people are challenged and attracted by a lively presentation of all that is good about Christianity. Or are we leaving all that up to the vicar?

Nick talked about the Alpha Course that took place in his local pub at Hertford Heath. A Team Ministry would give us the opportunity to share, get together and talk about Christianity and Jesus Christ. We need to start doing things together soon to bring new people into the Church.

Rev Alan Stewart – Clergy Deployment

Each one of us has our own particular gift, together we are stronger than on our own. With the current clergy availability, national deployment has to cope with decreasing numbers, whilst the population increases. To justify our current deployment the workload could be shared more equally in order to safeguard our four clergy for the next seven years.

Hertford clergy "get on" and meet to support each other at present. A Team would ensure this continues, as new members would have to commit to this way of working. Churches together can offer:

- Outreach like HertFest
- Holiday Clubs
- Courses and support for people working with children and young people
- New styles of services – new venues i.e. pubs/socialising – going to where people are.
- New initiatives resourced and run together not individually

Rev Robert Thompson – Thinking

There is a danger that meetings like this can draw us away from the bigger picture. Our thinking can be wound around personal opinion and it might help to step back from our personal assessment of the scheme and its motives and ask one simple question: *"What does God think of all the new plans we are making for his Church in Hertford?"*

What kind of wisdom does a Team represent? What kind of thinking is this? In essence, is a Team a good thing? The only way we can evaluate any vision of the Church is by considering it in the light of the God whose church it is.

Robert suggested seven 'marks' of the common life together which we can see modelled in the life of God, the togetherness of the Holy Trinity, things that we would celebrate and embrace in the life of his Church:

- Worshipping Together
- Working Together
- Listening Together
- Learning Together
- Blessed Together
- Together Bound
- A future shaped by God

In summary, the Church we want to see is that which God wants to see, rooted in the example of love and service of one another for God's sake. There are issues, change being one of them.

A future shaped by God demands that we learn confidence in placing ourselves in his hands and act by faith, and if Team Ministry is construed along these lines then I believe we are doing things God's way, a God from who only good can come.

Questions and Answers

Jane Cohen (St A)

Q: Will the team structure interfere with the ability of each church to choose a priest that fits their particular needs, traditions and desires?

All Saints Alive

A: Each church will continue to choose its own priest. The selection process will change slightly, in that a member of the team will form part of the selection panel

Jean Lord (AS)

Q: Will all the priests leave simultaneously at the end of their seven year terms?

A: Very unlikely and something the team would work hard to avoid. Some may extend their period (in agreement with the parish) and some may be called to a new challenge earlier than the seven-year term.

Clare Johnson (HT HH)

Q When will the team be in place legally?

A Probably no earlier than late 2008 (Possibly Advent). To be followed up with the Archdeacon.

Jenny Atkin (St A)

Q: Can resources be shared?

A: Yes where there is the opportunity for improving facilities or avoiding unnecessary cost.

Q: What about organists?

A ; Yes where possible – and where it fits with their commitments to other churches and their own wishes.

Andrew Crompton (HT)

Q: How would joint evangelism work?

A: Something that will need work and thought. This is a good example of what the Team Council will be doing.

Glyn Barker (HT)

Q: How does this vision get translated into action on the ground?

A: This is down to all of us, and will depend on good clear communication

Leon Ajao (AS)

Q: What implications does the team structure have for pastoral care? Will it be like a Doctor's Surgery?

A: Pastoral care is something for all of us and will continue to come from established relationships in the main. There might be a role for a 'drop-in' surgery for those who prefer it – something under consideration at St Andrew's already.

Janet Bird (AS)

Q: Does this mean we could set up some cover for days off?

A: Yes

Someone

Q: Will the information we have heard tonight be available?

A: Yes, it will be made available to all – and we are happy to be held to it.

Family Services

You are invited to come and join us at our regular Family Services at

11.30am on June 1st
"Dads and Trains"

and at

11.30am on July 6th
"Holidays"

both in

All Saints' Church, Hertford

A short service with story, hymns, prayers and special activities.

Coffee/drinks and cakes will be served afterwards

*For more details please ring:
Rev Jo Loveridge on 01992 584899*

Look forward to seeing you there!