

## **A few words from the Vicar ....**

<sup>19</sup>*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*  
<sup>20</sup>*and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’ (Matthew 28:19-20)*

Serving the world in God’s love (mission), which includes sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others (evangelism), is at the very core of what it means to be a Church. Only prayer and worship are more important.

Engaging in mission and evangelism is not the sole responsibility of the clergy, but is a task for the whole Church, laity and clergy alike. Not least because Jesus’ last earthly words to the first disciples (see above) was a command to work at growing the Church. As we are His disciples too, He commands us to do likewise.

Of course, God is the source of Church growth. Nonetheless, as Jesus’ disciples, we all have a role to play in working to achieve that growth (1 Corinthians 3:5-9).

So, for the past few months, the PCC has been working to update our Mission Action Plan (MAP). Four priorities have been identified:

- Expanding our ministry amongst children, young people, and young families.
- Encouraging numerical and spiritual growth.
- Motivating and equipping the laity to take greater responsibility for, and play a greater role in, mission and evangelism. This includes encouraging greater involvement in initiatives aimed at combatting poverty.
- Better serving the needs of the older residents of the parish.

Against these priorities, we have identified 24 actions to be taken over the course of the next few years.

There is further work to be done on the draft, not least in finding volunteers to take forward some of the proposed initiatives (currently implementing the plan is entirely clergy led, which is nowhere near ideal).

Planning is essential for any organisation, including the Church. Personally, I find planning helps me because it allows me to prioritise where I spend my time. However, our plans should always carry a health warning because God might have other ideas. Therefore, we must always be open to the possibility that God might call us to do something off plan and act accordingly.

Indeed, in many ways, producing a MAP is an optional extra. There is nothing in Acts to suggest the Apostles produced a master plan, yet under their leadership and in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church grew rapidly in those early years.

Ultimately, mission and evangelism work best when we allow ourselves to be prompted in what we do by God. That means prayer, and a lot of it!

More about our MAP next month.

In the meantime, we begin something new this month. Called 'First Fridays', we meet on the first Friday of each month (7.30pm at the vicarage) for pizza, a glass of wine (or juice if preferred), chat, Bible reflection and prayer, ending the evening with a simple Communion. All are welcome, but please let me know if you plan to attend (especially if you have any dietary requirements).

Every Blessing

*Dave*