



## “In Touch” Issue no. 7 Autumn 2014



My In Touch letter no. 5 (Autumn 2013) reviewed progress towards the goals in our Mission Action Plan. (MAP) After review, new goals were suggested for 2014/15 and brought to the PCC in the Spring.

Publicity about that was delayed by my operation, but I'd like now to set out the revised goals for the next year or more. I've grouped these under 3 headings: 'Celebrate', 'Reach out', 'Communicate'.

**Goal 1. Celebrate. To develop the 9.30 Family Communion.** Under Map we put in place a new 'Family Praise' on 1<sup>st</sup> Sundays, and a Family Communion on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays, and these came into operation from April 2013. (Letter no. 4 explained this) The aim was to have two services each month which were specifically orientated towards families and younger people so that we could invite new people to services which would be more accessible and attractive for them. In order to achieve this, we have set the following aims:

- (i) To try to ensure readings and talks are inspiring, relevant and challenging for younger people, many of whom won't be experienced in Bible stories or the teachings of the Christian faith.

As part of this, I obtained permission from the Bishop of Bedford to depart from the readings set in the Lectionary for a particular Sunday when an alternative would be more helpful for an all-age congregation. So far we have only felt the need to do this once in the last few months, but it is most useful to have such flexibility.

- (ii) We will analyse attendance to see whether we are attracting –and retaining–new people. We will also examine what else we need to do, by way of advertising, teaching materials, or any other methods used successfully by other growing churches in our locality.
- (iii) We will explore ways to make our church hall setting after services especially welcoming to people new to church. We are particularly concerned over what happens to those that come over there without a ready-made group of friends whom they already know and can sit with.

### **Goal 2 : Reach out**

- (i) Links with schools. The clergy will approach Goldington Green Academy , Putnoe School , Goldington Academy (formerly Goldington Middle School) and Mark Rutherford School to explore and encourage further links between these schools and St Mary's.
- (ii) Pre-school children. A new group for families with babies and toddlers was trialled from October 2013 until March 2014 on Tuesday mornings in church (partly in response to a suggestion from Foodbank organisers that this might meet a local need) . I am grateful to all those including Mary Collins, Karen Cribbes, Mary Everitt, and Wendy Watmough who helped Jackie Buck and myself to make that possible. Sadly we did not get enough numbers to build a sustainable group. There are other existing local groups, and it may be that there is just enough local provision. We will keep a list of enquirers, in case we can re-start a group.

**Goal 3 : Communicate.**

(i) It was decided to re-vamp the Church welcome Pack. Work has been proceeding on this. It was decided we should aim to give out a shortened version of this to people contacting the church about matters such as weddings and baptisms, and be offered as part of our follow-up contact after funerals.

We shared the need for sacrificial giving of time, talents and money in our stewardship campaign at the end of last year. I am grateful to all those in our church who give faithfully to keep the everyday life and work of our church running.

(ii) We need to each recognise that our friendly contact with someone next to us in church, or at coffee, or wherever, can bring people to church or back to church. I wrote about this in letter no.6. It really is down to all of us.

So these are our updated goals . Some things are already underway. I hope you will uphold all this in your prayers, support it in your conversations, and enable it to come to fruition by doing what you can whenever God gives you opportunity. Please don't merely observe and comment: get involved.

Together we are the body of Christ. As we say at the end of services: let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Christ. Amen.

With my love and prayers

*Richard*