

All Saints' Church
Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #83

August 2023

Dear Church Family,

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. (1 Cor 3: 5-7)

On Saturday 15th July, the PCC (Parochial Church Council) enjoyed an Away Day together in the Church Hall. We spent the day working through the Leading your Church into Growth Local course, which helps churches explore how to successfully grow – in number, in faith and in serving their local community. In this slightly longer than usual pastoral letter, I'd like to take the opportunity to share with you what we learned from the course and what will happen next.

The day began with us agreeing that we wanted our church to grow – we want more people in our villages to know the love of God and come to know Jesus. We also agreed that we need a clear plan in place to facilitate that growth. The course material then encouraged us to think about what it called the 4Ps:

- Prayer – praying specifically for growth
- Presence – how we build friendships and make our presence felt in a positive way in the community, e.g. through social media, physical presence, social action, parent and toddler groups, weddings, baptisms and funerals, etc
- Proclamation – how we share the Good News of Jesus, especially at major festivals
- Persuasion – how we respond when family, friends, neighbours want to know more about the Christian faith, e.g. through running an enquirers course.

In groups, we discovered that All Saints is pretty good at 'presence' but we needed to focus much more on 'prayer'.

The next session was looking at how we develop engaging worship, recognising that our Sunday morning services are our main 'shop window' for those exploring the Christian faith. The course authors state that if we are going to do *one thing* to make our church grow, then developing engaging worship for all ages is it. We thought about the sacred and social aspects of worship and considered how user friendly our worship is, i.e. if someone of any age came to our church for the first time, with little or no experience of worship, how would they find the experience? What would make them happy? What might confuse or bore them? This led to a very interesting exercise where we each completed a checklist saying what we thought of various aspects of worship such as the welcome, the building, sung worship, and preaching and leading – what was a 'must', a 'should', a 'could' or something

we'd already done, such as putting in a hearing loop. We then combined our 'scores' to create a PCC checklist which showed the things we should prioritise for All Saints. The aspects of worship that scored the highest, as things we need to prioritise, include:

- Improving our provision for children
- Regularly reviewing and developing our music
- Providing toilets in church.

During the afternoon, we spent some time thinking about how welcoming we are as church, and how to create a culture of invitation. We thought of those on the 'fringe' of church – people who don't regularly and frequently attend worship but who have connections to church, such as the families who come to Little Saints, those who come to the church for baptisms, weddings and funerals, users of the hall, those who visit the churchyard, our own friends, family and neighbours. When we totalled these up, it came to around 1000 people!



The rest of the day was spent exploring how we support people who are 'seekers' to become 'disciples', and then 'servants' and 'apostles'. We realised that we needed to create 'stepping stones', e.g. if we run an enquirers course, we then need to consider 'what next?' for people.

Before we left, we made a list of what our priorities should be going forwards. Amongst the ideas suggested were:

- Being more intentional about praying for growth
- Creating a new Children's Area in the north aisle (where the current children's mat is) – this will enable parents to access the service while under 5s quietly play
- Moving forward on the plan to install toilets and a servery in church
- Focussing on welcoming families to church, especially the 80+ families who either are or have been part of Little Saints
- Having a regular programme of social events that church members can enjoy and to which they can bring family/friends
- Continuing to introduce modern worship songs in our sung worship
- Build on the early success of Café Church.

When I first arrived at All Saints almost six years ago, I floated the idea of Café Church, knowing it to be a very family friendly form of worship that had helped other churches I'd been part of to grow. As there wasn't much enthusiasm at the time, I put the idea on the 'back burner'. Over the last 18 months we have developed 'Breakfast Church' prior to the All-Age Service. This became so popular in the spring that we ran out of space at the back of church to accommodate the numbers who were coming. In June, we decided to move the tables into the nave (the main area of church) but still didn't have enough room for everyone. We realised that if we were going to create more table space, we were in fact

morphing into Café Church. This felt tremendously exciting. But many of you may be wondering 'What is Café Church?' and 'Will I like it?' 'Will I want to come?'



Café Church is an informal approach to church, based around a coffee-shop style setting. As people arrive, hot and cold drinks are served to the tables along with pastries,



muffins and fruit. As in a typical all-age service there is still a Bible reading, a talk and hymns/songs but we also use film, drama, puppets, and games to illustrate a Bible story or theme, and there's the opportunity for open discussion around the table. The core values are hospitality, friendship and discipleship. What was lovely about our July service was the mix of ages – from the very young to those in their 90s, and receiving such positive comments about what they enjoyed.

I don't expect everyone to embrace Café Church, in the same way that not everyone enjoys the Book of Common Prayer, but it would be lovely if you could have an open mind and give it a go, especially if you usually come to the All-Age Service. I want it to be the *main* service that we invite young families to – those seeking baptism for their children, families coming to Little Saints – and it's important that members of the church are present to welcome them. If it's really not for you though, you are very welcome to join the 8.30am service that week and worship with a congregation that is also growing (24 last Sunday!). The next Café Church will be on Sept 10th.

At its next meeting on 4th October, building on the away day, the PCC will spend some time creating a plan for the church going forward to help us continue to grow in number, in faith and in how we reach out and serve the villages of Cottenham and Rampton. If you have any comments or ideas, do contact either myself, Marie, a Churchwarden or any member of the PCC. We'd love to hear from you!

Wishing you all a restful summer,

Lynda

Rector@allsaintscottenham.org.uk

01954 583651