

2020 Vision for the Long Stratton and Pilgrim Team Ministry

Just Believe

(Mark 5:36)



Working Together Growing Faith

Mark 5:21-43

'When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered round him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue rulers, names Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realised that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'who touched me?'"

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the home of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; **JUST BELIEVE.**"

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum!*" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Two little words, taken from a familiar passage from the bible, form the title of this vision document. **JUST BELIEVE.** When faced with the impossible thing, the death of his daughter. When he could have been railing against Jesus for wasting time on the journey to his home, looking for that one person in the huge crowd, pushing against him, the person who had touched him, precious time, in which Jesus might have had a chance to save his daughter, when time had simply run out, Jesus turns to the synagogue ruler, who has just lost his daughter and says 'Don't be afraid; **JUST BELIEVE.**'

JUST BELIEVE and **ACT.** For the Haemorrhaging woman, that meant getting close enough to Jesus, to touch his clothes, for Jairus it meant taking Jesus to the room where his dead daughter lay, and believing that Jesus could turn this devastating picture around.

This vision may seem to us to be equally impossible, we might feel that it has simply come too late, but we worship a God for whom 'Nothing is impossible'. As Jesus took Jairus' daughter by the hand, and invited her to get up. So Jesus can transform our churches, into places of growth, is it time to get up, and worship him and **JUST BELIEVE** and **ACT.**

What is the vision?

In a nutshell that the churches in our team will grow by 100% over the next 18 -24 months

- There will be 100% growth in numbers across all the churches, including Messy Church
- There will be growth in House groups/Bible discussion groups. More people will attend the existing groups and/or new groups will evolve to cater for growing numbers
- There will be more people seeking Baptism/Confirmation
- There will be growth in service to the local community.
- There will be growth in financial giving

What does 100% growth in numbers look like?

Some facts and figures based on the 2019 Statistics for Mission Return. *(There have been no figures submitted for Great Moulton as yet)*

	Number on Electoral roll	Average Sunday attendance	Baptisms
Aslacton	19	Fortnightly 12	2
Bunwell	25	Fortnightly 19	1
Carleton Rode	21	Fortnightly 23	0
Great Moulton			
Stratton St. Mary	79	Weekly 39 adults 1 child	0
Stratton St. Michael	12	Fortnightly 9	5
Tibenham	14	Monthly 12	0
Wacton	15	Fortnightly 9	0
Current totals	185	83	8
What would 100% growth look like?	366	166	16

Messy Church

Messy Church meets monthly, in 2019 average figures were 15 adults and 14 children under the age of 16

100% growth would look like 28 children and 30 adults.

So far in 2020 we have seen

- January – 20 children 22 adults
- February – 22 children 23 adults

Perhaps our target needs to be raised already to 40 children and 44 adults!

Housegroups/Bible discussion groups

We currently have 3 house groups that meet weekly during term time and 1 Bible discussion group which meets fortnightly during the spring and summer months (combined total attendance 33).

100% growth would see this grow to 6 house groups, 2 bible discussion groups and 66 Members

Currently just 17.83% of the people on the electoral roll are attending a housegroup/bible discussion group.

At the Housegroup Christmas social I asked members of housegroups to say what they value about being part of a housegroup, this is what people said.



What would 100% growth in service look like?

Growth in service is naturally more difficult to measure than numerical growth. In the 2019 Statistics for Mission return, the one-off question related to social action and the churches engagement with their community.

They offered a list of the most widespread activities undertaken by churches. Below is a breakdown from across the team

	Asl	Bun	CR	Gt M	Str St. Mary	Str St. Michael	Tib	Wac
Community Café			S					
Food bank			S		R			
Holiday/breakfast/after-school clubs for children					R			
Lunch club, coffee morning or similar hospitality for older people	R		S		R			R
Money matters and debt advice								
Night shelter or other homeless provision								
Parent/carer and toddler group or play group								
Pastoral provision for the wider community (e.g street pastors, counselling/support, befriending schemes)								
Youth work					R/S			
Other community activity		Knitting group			Village screen GNO			Craft & chat

R = Responsible for **S = supports**

This is not an exhaustive list of what service looks like across the team, but gives a flavour of what is currently happening across our team, and what we could think about doing moving forward. 100% growth would mean that we were filling in more boxes, or writing more activities under 'other'.

Other activities that regularly take place include:

- Collective worship in Aslacton Primary school, Carleton Rode Primary school, Manor Field Infant school and St. Mary's Junior school
- Open the book teams go into St. Mary's Junior school weekly
- Services in Harker House and Mayfields take place monthly

What would 100% growth in giving look like?

This is difficult to measure; a crude measure would be by looking at our 2019 parish share returns. Although parish share is not our total expenditure it is the biggest expenditure within our churches.

If income increased by 100% not only would we be able to afford to pay the parish share in full which would secure our team moving forward, but we would have more money available to set aside for mission and other activities. How many PCC's have surplus budget for evangelism?

A caveat of course when looking at these figures would be that some churches within the team are exhausting their current reserves whilst paying the parish share. An increase in giving would enable those churches to protect those reserves moving forward.

	Parish share request 2019	Received in 2019	Parish share request 2020
Aslacton	£7,855	£2,605 (33.2% paid)	£6,905
Bunwell	£12,500	£10,000 (80% paid)	£10,985
Carleton Rode	£14,500	£12,500 (93.1% paid)	£12,745
Great Moulton	£9,325	£3,000 (32.2% paid)	£8,195
Stratton St. Mary	£31,841	£21,000 (66% paid)	£25,834
Stratton St. Michael	£7,473	£5,500 (73.6% paid)	£7,500
Tibenham	£6,530	£6,530 (100% paid)	£5,736
Wacton	£5,557	£5,557 (100% paid)	£6,100
Totals	£95,581	£67,693 (70.8% paid)	£84,000

How do we achieve this?

1. Establishing a culture of growth

Biology teaches us that 'All living things grow', the church is the body of Christ, it is a living thing, and therefore we should expect to see it grow

Matthew 13:31-32 says:

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

There are a number of growth parables in the gospels. These all combine the work of God alongside that of the people.

We need to determine if we as individual churches and as a team are in maintenance mode or mission mode.

Each of the PCC's will be encouraged to think through the 7 Ps of a Maintenance church and a Mission church as soon as possible (see below). And think about where they sit on scale between maintenance and mission.

The Maintenance Church & the 7 Ps

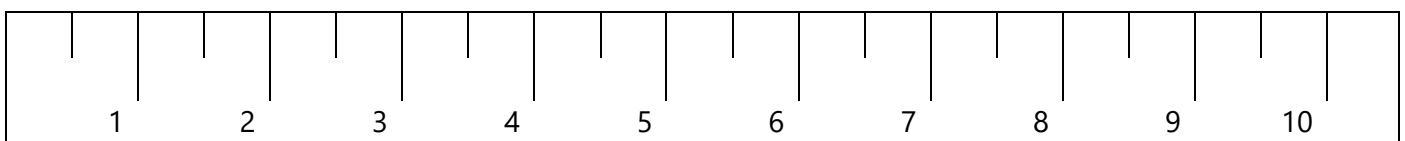
1. Paying the bills
2. Preserving the building
3. Playing the annual round
4. Protecting the past
5. Pleasing the insider
6. Prioritising the present
7. Pretending it's not happening

The Mission Church & the 7 Ps

1. Praying for growth
2. Prioritising the outsider
3. Promoting the faith
4. Preparing our people to welcome
5. Putting money into evangelism
6. Prioritising fresh ways of doing things
7. Publicising everything well

Maintenance

Mission



2. We need to be talking about growth

2020 Vision plan will be launched at the Team Away day on the 7th March 2020. Over the next 2-3 months, we need to be sharing the vision with as many people as possible and encourage everyone to take ownership of the vision. This will be done through PCC meetings, Team Council, Churchwardens meeting and preaching.

3. We need to be strategic with Prayer, Presence, Proclamation and Persuasion

Prayer

When the church becomes a house of prayer the people will come running

Brother Roger of Taizé

Prayer is central to everything we do, 'Growth' will become a focus of our prayers.

The team will adopt a prayer for growth, written as part of the Joint Team away day, to be used in every service and at every meeting. As our starting point we will use the Leading your church into growth growth prayer.

*God of mission, who alone brings growth to your church,
send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

One church wrote a prayer for themselves, asking God to send them new people and promising to welcome them properly when they came. They printed it on a bookmark and asked every church member to pray the prayer daily. They used it every week in the public intercessions. So many people started turning up to church services, and staying, that they decided to stop praying the prayer for a while because they were overwhelmed.

Wouldn't that be amazing – when it seems impossible Jesus says '**JUST BELIEVE**'

The 'Prayer for growth' will be printed in a variety of forms for every member, as a daily reminder to pray for growth

Monthly prayer meetings will take place across the team specifically to pray for growth. These will be in addition to the morning prayer services already taking place

Every member of the church will be encouraged to pray for 5-10 people they know by name who they would like to see become a member of our churches. These people need to be local and people they would invite along to events and services.

We pray specifically for growth and effective evangelism

Presence

The first and most vital way in which the church proclaims the gospel is by being good news and living good news. Wouldn't it be brilliant to hear someone saying: 'That church, St. William's – it's good news for this neighbourhood?'

Robert Warren

Churches are generally good at presence, we like to put on events, we have our regular services, we enjoy running coffee mornings and fetes, hosting concerts, lectures, flower festivals and quizzes. Some of this we might think of as fundraising, but it puts us out there, through it people get to know who we are. It builds up our presence. Being present is a good thing.

We need to build on the presence we already have in our communities. And ensure that through our presence we are living the good news.

For many of us, it is easier to invite someone to a concert at the church, than it is to invite them to a service in church.

We establish 'presence', build friendships and make our presence felt in a positive way both in the local community and amongst all our members

Proclamation

The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelisation if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God are not proclaimed.

Pope Paul VI

Proclamation builds on 'presence'.

Where are the opportunities within our churches for people to hear the gospel proclaimed?

These could include, small events, big events, Messy Church or Family Services, Major Festivals, Mission weekends, Men's and Women's events, School events, Occasional Offices.

What 'proclamation' events might we feel comfortable inviting our 'presence' people too? Is it easier to invite them to a Christmas Carol service, than a normal Sunday Holy Communion service?

We invite our 'presence people' to come and hear a 'proclamation' of the Good News. That might be a Men's pub night or a major festival

Persuasion

When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed, but others said, 'we will hear you again about this.' At that point Paul left them. But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them

Acts 17:32-34

Paul speaks to a small group of people who want to know more. One-to-one or in small groups.

In the next 24 months we will run three 'enquirers' groups across the team. Either Alpha or Exploring Christianity.

The first will be in the Autumn term 2020 beginning in September.

We will invite all the wedding couples married in our churches over the last 3 years and all the parents who have had children baptised in our churches in the last 3 years.

These will be advertised across the team for anyone interested in finding out more about the Christian faith, but we will be intentional about inviting people who have shown an interest in our proclamation events and the contacts we are establishing through our presence events.

We invite those interested by our proclamation to join a small 'persuasion' or enquirers group or to take part in a follow up one to one journey into faith

4. We need to have a culture of Invitation and Welcome

In simple terms all it would take for our churches to grow by 100% is for every person to bring 1 friend to church

We need to prayerfully develop a culture of inviting people. We can start by inviting people to 'Presence' events, such as a concert in church, and then prayerfully consider inviting them to a special festival service, a Carol Service, or Easter morning service.

But what happens if they come to a service, and no one welcomes them, they feel uncomfortable, they sit in the 'wrong pew', they don't know when they need to stand and sit and no one helps them.

How do we ensure the 1 friend we bring to church, ever comes back?

Suppose there are 100 people lined up interested in joining your church, in an average church only 10-15% will make it to finishing line of fully belonging and contributing to the church. The others will fall as they encounter 7 different obstacles (fences) along the way.

All churches will be tasked with really considering our welcome over the next few months, this will begin at the Team away day when we will consider the seven obstacles (fences) to people becoming integrated members of our community and what we can do to lower the obstacles or remove them

Experience has shown that churches that hack away at the fences, creating a really good welcome and integration pathways and culture, can increase the proportion of people who stick from 10-15% to 50-60%

The challenge of change

If nothing changes, nothing changes

In order for our churches to grow, the chances are some things may have to change, we may have to re-think service styles, we may have to think about the hymns we sing, we might need to re-order our buildings, create more flexible worship spaces, provide access to toilets, kitchen facilities. Whatever the changes may be, we have to accept that change is usually challenging and difficult.

From over 1,000 church questionnaires, Bob Jackson found eight categories of change associated with numerical growth. These cover a huge range of possible improvements in church life – how do we know what would be right to try in our own churches?

Eight changes that lead to Church Growth

1. Planting new congregations – i.e Messy Church
2. Making worship less austere
3. Better provision for children and young people
4. Improving welcome and integration
5. Better quality, more varied, accessible music
6. More lay involvement in leadership
7. Better small groups and pastoral care
8. Improvements to buildings

The timeless gospel of God’s love in Jesus needs a changing church to keep sharing it effectively in a changing world.

If anyone is interested in reading a book about church change, I recommend 'Who stole my church? What to do when the church you love tries to enter the 21st Century.' By George MacDonald

At the joint PCC away day, every PCC will get the following checklist to complete at their next PCC meeting and from that to identify 3 steps forward. We can’t do everything at once, but if we take it step by step we may start getting somewhere.

	Must do	Could do	Already done	Not relevant
Shorten the length of your services				
Move services to a better time				
Install a dimmer switch				
Use spotlighting				
Tidy up the church building				
Improve the sound system				
Purchase a CD player				
Make the space more comfortable				
Encourage people to sit closer together				
Bring the action closer to the people (move Communion table)				
Find and commission Church Welcomers				
Serve decent coffee				
Develop use of visuals				
Smile				
Use times of silence				
Improve your music				
Do some intensive work with church musicians				
Shorten readings				
Use fewer and better words				
Improve the quality of sermons				
Establish or improve arrangements for Children				
Make receiving communion a stronger experience				
Provide decent and clean toilets				
Deal with access issues: Ramps, hearing loops etc.				

What is the plan?

Over the coming months, PCC's, churchwardens, Ministry team, Team council and all church members will be encouraged to feed into the plan opportunities for growth.

Below is a table of the next 24 months, with some starting points. Items already in the planning, opportunities for invitation, festival services etc.

And then there are the boxes that are yet to be filled in, plans specific to each church, for PCC's and church members to consider and feed into, having thought through some of the material covered in this document. And Plans for the team as a whole, for the ministry team, churchwardens, team council to consider.

This is a working document that will evolve over the coming months, each church will develop its own plans for the coming 24 months, which will feed into one overarching plan.

	Already in the planning	Opportunities for invitation Festivals etc	Plans specific to each church (PCC's and church members to complete)	Plans for the team (Ministry team, Churchwardens, Team Council)
March 2020	Joint Team PCC away day to ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Vision • Formulate a growth prayer • Exercise relating to a culture of welcome and integration 			
April 2020	Advertise the re-launch of Ten2Ten Service with targeted invitation Begin monthly meetings for Growth across the team Start planning for and advertising Holiday Club	School services in church Holy Week and Easter Services 5 th – 12 th April		
May 2020	Re-Launch Ten2Ten Service in St. Mary's 2 nd Sunday of every month beginning 10 th May Thy Kingdom Come 10 days of prayer for our communities and growth Specific Prayer events??	Godparent Sunday 3 rd May Pentecost Sunday 31 st May		

June 2020	Date to be confirmed Confirmation service Start planning for Alpha/Christianity explored course			
July 2020	Holiday Club Start advertising for Alpha/Christianity explored course and sending out personalised invitations	School services in church		
August 2020				
September 2020	Launch Alpha/Christianity explored course	Harvest services School services in church <i>Back to Church Sunday</i>		
October 2020		Harvest services All souls, Memorial services		
November 2020		Remembrance Sunday		
December 2020	Book Confirmation Service	School services in church Advent and Christmas services		
January 2021	Start planning for Alpha/Christianity explored course			
February 2021	Start advertising for Alpha/Christianity explored course and sending out personalised invitations	<i>Relationship Sunday</i>		
March 2021		Holy Week services School services in church		

April 2021	Launch Alpha/Christianity explored course Start planning for and advertising Holiday Club	Easter Services 4 th April		
May 2021	Thy Kingdom Come 10 days of prayer for our communities 13 th – 23 rd May	Godparent Sunday 2 nd May Pentecost 23 rd May		
June 2021				
July 2021	Holiday club Book Confirmation Service	School Services in Church		
August 2021				
September 2021		Harvest Services School Services in Church		
October 2021	Start planning for Alpha/Christianity explored course	Harvest Services All Souls/Memorial services		
November 2021	Start advertising for Alpha/Christianity explored course and sending out personalised invitations	Remembrance Sunday		
December 2021		School Services in Church Advent and Christmas Services		
January 2022	Launch Alpha/Christianity Explored course			
February 2022		<i>Relationship Sunday</i>		