

The Body of Christ - Fit For Purpose.

Ephesians 4:15-16. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.



Laying out a vision for the mechanism of ministry, enabling a whole church in service of God and each other.

I want to share with you something of the vision of the structure of our parish work which is already beginning to take form. I want to explain something of the vision itself, how it is working in practice, and what it means for us as the body of Christ, the Church, all of us and our calling to build God's Kingdom.

Theology and Practice. I have always believed that the work of the Church is the work of the whole Church. Each of us has something to contribute, just as each of us has a need of the Church. It is tempting to quote JFK with is, 'ask not what your church can do for you, but what you can do for your church' but the truth of a healthy church is, it's both. Of course, as Christ teaches, we should always seek to put others before ourselves, but there will be times when we have to accept that we need help. What's more, we don't walk alone. We do this journey together, that's what being God's people is all about. We are incomplete not just without God but without each other.

In practice this means ministry is the responsibility of everyone, and my role is to lead us in that collective effort, each of us with different roles, each of us with a part to play. That may vary over time in the seasons of our life, as what we can offer changes, and what the church needs changes too. But here two major advantages of every member in ministry.

Firstly, we share the load between us. Too often too few people do most of the work, and small teams are overworked with members feeling trapped because stepping down would harm the work of the church. When someone finally steps down, the rest of the team faces even greater pressure, and the process repeats faster and faster until there's no team left. An alternative model is a large team, nobody feeling stressed, that others feel able to join without fear of being overloaded. The work is easier, more enjoyable, and more sustainable. This latter situation is our aim.

Secondly, as our needs expand, so do our abilities. As our church grows, the increase in demand is matched by the increase in capability. That is VITAL for a healthy growing church, and creates the right incentives for growth. The alternative is where a small number of people doing most of the work fear growth as it will be expected they will simply take on greater and greater demands. When growth happens, the quality of ministry decreases, and eventually the pressures mean the small team collapses, no ministry, church declines. It is the church equivalent of the seed which lands in the rocky soil, if you like. But healthy plants grow roots as they grow leaves, they grow their support as they grow in size, and there is no limit on size, as long as the plant grows in balance.

Thirdly, it is Biblical. We are the body of Christ. This is our work.

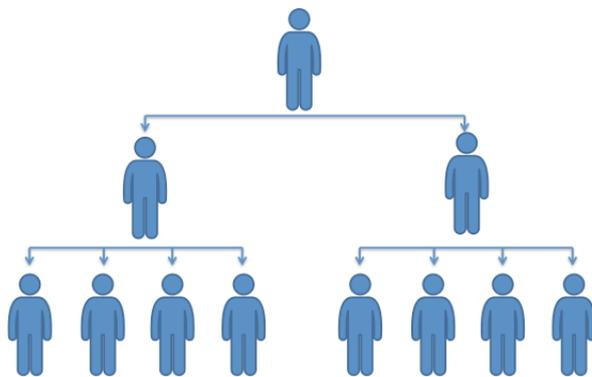
Thank you to everyone who does what they can, and whatever you do. It's appreciated. For some, that's prayer, and that's vital. Thank you.

As you are, I am passionate about building the Kingdom of God in our parish, and beyond. But this is God's work and our work, together. If we're wise, we can ensure that growth in numbers does not mean a diminution in quality, but an improvement, as economies of scale mean higher quality output from a growing team. It does not mean we lose the personal and caring environment, it does mean we have to understand what caring in a growing church looks like. And that structure for growth, based on every member in ministry, is what I want to explore next.

Structure for Growth

Why Structure?

This diagram shows a simple hierarchical management structure. It demonstrates the basic principle of teams lead by a co-ordinator or leader, who is active in that ministry themselves (think of this structure but flatter) under the overall supervision of the Incumbent. It ensure that the Incumbent is only ever one level away from the actual ministry taking place, and those leaders can request help from the Incumbent at any time, and the Incumbent/leadership team can easily interact in face to face ministry without having to leap over layers of management, simply work with the team leader and their team where necessary. It is an authority structure, but its primary purpose is to structure the work of the church in a better way.



As the church grows, and by church I mean the people of HTD and St Guthlac's, the teams can simply grow according to our needs and our abilities, as God calls and equips us to do. It is this combination of clear and visible lines of delegation and authority, infinite expandability, and specific oversight of specific areas of ministry by capable, appointed leaders, which will enable us to grow in quality and quantity, in depth and breadth, in love and in number.

Selecting Leaders

So far, leaders have been appointed on the basis of discernment of the Incumbent, through conversations with many, prayer, common sense, and with prayerful support from a range of other mature Christian members of the church. In I think all cases, including tonight, all appointments have been brought to the PCC for further discernment and affirmation. I have appreciated a lot of prayerful support from other mature Christians in the church, but the responsibility for all decisions I have made rests with myself as the Rector, and PCC decisions rest with the PCC. Any potential advisory body of 'elders' in the future would be advisory only.

Further Benefits of Structure

Clarity Creates Legitimacy. Everyone should know who is in what role, what that means and by what authority they are there, enabling greater acceptance of a person in a role, and greater accountability of that person to the Incumbent and the church as a whole. Furthermore, it creates

lines of demarcation. Please offer your support, helpful feedback and thoughts, but clear lines around areas of responsibility enables people to affirm their role and fulfil it without undue interference.

Clarity Creates Opportunity This will encourage the exploration and usage of our giftings, with visible and easy routes to conversations and joining ministries. This will be enhanced by visible signage and literature to help make it as easy as possible to serve. It should enable people to serve in a more effective and happier way, better planning, more responsive leadership, more fertile creativity, having a leader with a specific remit.

Clarity Creates Communication. Designated leaders tasked with improved communication to the whole church re a specific are enables everyone to feel a greater sense of belonging.

Worldly Structure?

Hierarchy, management, all sounds a bit like the office. Aren't we distinct from the world? I hope so. So do we reject anything we see in the world? Not quite. First of all, God made the world, and sin corrupted good things. A lot which is in the world is good gone wrong. Business structure is in the world, but there's the Godly original too. We're aiming for that. So let's see what Jesus says about it.

Matthew 20:25-28. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

A church then is a 'lowerarchy' if you pardon the word. The world might see the person at the 'top', but Christ would see that he who wants to be first, should be last. Everyone, Rector most of all, is there to serve God, the church, the parish and beyond, as well as family, friends and neighbours like us all. So this should never feel like an ego trip for anyone, pride is always a temptation, but may it never be such in my heart. It's not easy for any of us, but simply put, leadership is service, sacrifice, love and obedience to God's will. In this we need God's help, and thus your prayers.

All structure proposed in this document is totally and utterly under this teaching of Christ.

The Progress Thus Far

The current teams/leaders (in no particular order):

Ministry and Services. Leader: Rev James P. Team: Leaders and preachers, ministers with PTO, readers and prayers.

Pastoral Team. Leader: Cathy Ratcliffe. Team: Recruiting!

Outreach: Vacant.. ish. Pioneers Rachel Matthews and Paul Horton.

Worship Leader (HTD): Phil Smith. Team: Worship band.

Audio Visual Leader: Chris Floyd. Team: Barry Ratcliffe, Dominic Matthews, Rachel Matthews.

Online and Social Media: Leader: Phil Smith. Team: Rachel Matthews (with regular oversight of website, Facebook and posters)

Connect Groups: Leader: James P but recruiting new leader. Connect Group Leaders, and ideally most/all members of the church.

Sunday Morning Children's Work: Co-ordinator: Wendy Clarke.

HTD Re-ordering. Leader: Barry Ratcliffe. Re-ordering team, plus Jennie to assist Barry re the DAC.

There are other ministries of great value which are done by great servants but are not currently given specific leadership.

Cleaning, refreshments, welcome, flowers.

This may change, but it's a work in progress.

Apologies if in my haste I have omitted anyone/anything.

Enabling not Limiting.

Leaders are responsible for the church's official work, and to help anyone assist in similar work.

Cathy isn't there to stop anyone being pastorally supportive, nor Rachel stopping anyone else

sharing the Gospel with a friend. These roles are to direct and advocate, support and guide, to lead

us all in specific areas, not limit our Connect Group or personal activities. Each leader meets with

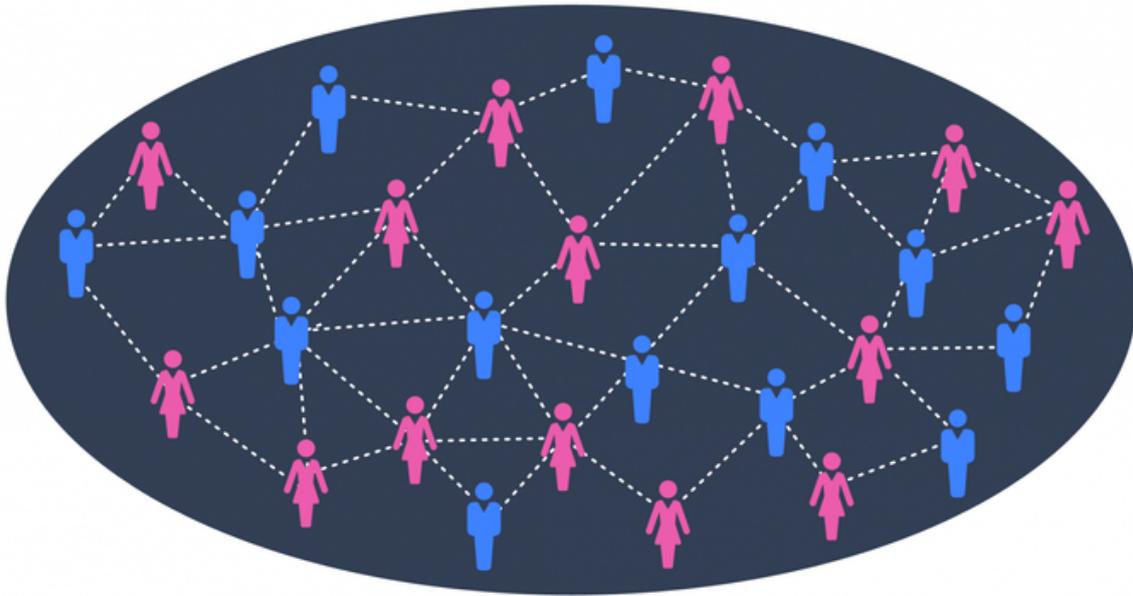
me, and guides me to where I might be of most use, and my email and phone line are not cut off to

anyone, but please do appreciate that often these leaders will be more able to help, and where

appropriate I may direct you to them. My direct interaction can and will happen in any area when

required, of course. But more on that shortly.

A Loving, Living Body.



Nothing in the organisational structure prevents what this diagram above represents or supersedes our love for one another, it intended to help it. How we interact as people in God's family is Spirit led, sometimes planned but often intuitive, organic and wonderful. We continue to work together in groups in church as friends. We lift up one another, we are human beings in human relationships with God bringing us together. That remains our binding cord, that remains our community spirit.

Nothing in this clear but very friendly organisational structure means you have to get permission you did not previously need to say lend a hand, be kind, phone a brother or sister in need, share something, encourage someone. This is taking our thriving, buzzing, loving, active church, and giving it some clarity as to how church work is organised, who you need to speak to, and who has the role to give direction in a certain matter.

Changing Expectations

Here is perhaps the greatest challenge of the vision. Am I stepping back from all face to face ministry? By no means! Does this mean that our cultural expectation of the Rector being the go to agent of the church's work in all circumstances will need to change? Yes. Can we do that without that being seen as the Rector not caring or someone getting a 'lesser' response? I hope so, because I believe it is not only more Biblical but also essential for health and growth.

In the Biblical model of church we are equal in value, but differ in roles, and we share the work accordingly, but the role of presbyter/priest/leader in a healthy growing church is one which enables us all to do God's work, within other roles and generally as Christians (someone may have a calling to be a deacon, (servant) but we're all called to serve where we can) as well as performing certain ministries themselves. See Acts 6:5-6, 1 Timothy 3 re overseers and deacons, 1 Cor 12, and much more.

It is my privilege to lead us, an utterly undeserved honour from God and his church, from you. That calling, as I understand it, is to lead us all in the work of the church. It is from the whole church, to the whole church, and to the world. That is what we see in the churches in Acts, in St Paul's letters, a whole church in ministry of all kinds, enabled and lead, a church well fed but also well exercised. That's a healthy church. We are already a long way towards that, there is no hint of rebuke in this vision, far from it! So many of you do so much, and I want to thank you, again and again. I know some of you have seen many changes, some you've liked, some you haven't, and you've stuck with it, and I know many of you also can see the potential and exciting times ahead. I know some of you have just had a very hard time of it with a range of life events, and just want to know your church loves you. I want you to know that too. I want you to feel supported, not just by me but by the whole church, and nothing I propose should make anyone feel less loved and supported, but much more so. I need your help to ensure this is so, within those principles of a whole church in the whole ministry of the church, as it develops and grows.

Without this shift in understanding and expectation, it is impossible for a church to grow beyond a certain size, so your understanding and support is so important. A church with an incumbent who tries to do it all is like a plant trying to grow big in a small pot, it never can. Eventually the plant withers/the pot breaks. Neither is acceptable to me, and I hope not to you either.

Now I'm a work in progress too! So help me, and help us all, by working through these structures, changing a few expectations, and with God, and only with God, together we will achieve so much more.

Final Thought.

One more thing. Let's make church enjoyable, all of it. Everyone is doing their best, let's make every comment we utter based on that understanding. Seemingly simple things can often take far longer than you might think. People have different ways of doing things, different strengths and weaknesses, different personalities, different needs, different ministries to offer. It's hard work sometimes being such a disparate people, we're from all backgrounds, different races, ages, regions etc, great! That is how the body of Christ is, and we're called make that into a welcoming, loving, caring, supportive, positive, open family, that is so focussed on others, so willing to serve, so generous with time, money and everything else, people just want to be a part of it. Everything proposed in this document is subject and subordinate to this. John 13:34-5 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Important Note. Any authority of any team leader is delegated from the Incumbent, who remains responsible for all usual areas. To have their roles endorsed by the PCC adds to their legitimacy in a vital way. But more importantly, this policy/vision is being brought to the APCM/PCC precisely because it is not intended in any way to replace the role of the PCC, but to be strategically overseen by it. The PCC, fulfils many functions not described in this proposal, legal, financial, canonical, material, safeguarding. Nothing regarding that is changed. But the PCC in its function as a strategic oversight body is not the right body to manage day to day pastoral care, preaching training, poster design, sermon series, sound systems, worship leading or evangelistic projects. That would be unwieldy and cumbersome and encroaching on matters beyond its intended purpose. But it is the right body to guide, input, oversee and where necessary speak forcefully into all these matters, and retains all the rightful powers any PCC should freely and rightly use at its discretion, as guided by Almighty God. Without a good PCC, as guardians of our purpose, the voice of God's people, the stewards of our resources, we would be in a bad way indeed.

Thank you for reading. God guide you in your thoughts.

James

Rev James E Pennington

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