

Nurture and Growth

In May 2017 the deacons assigned seven deacons to work in four key areas across the church, Pastoral Care, Prayer & Worship, Discipleship and Evangelism. These were identified as the four main areas that GHBC needs to develop as part of its vision of 'Knowing God to make Him known'.

Following this assignment, the Members Meetings in July, September, October and November each spent time discussing one of the key areas. Each time was very different but equally effective in enabling everyone to engage with the issues identified. Those attending were also able to share their own thoughts, suggestions and concerns in an open atmosphere of discussion.

The deacons intend that through 2018 action plans will be presented to the members for each area in order to develop our role as a church community for ourselves and for those living in Gorse Hill. These plans will be developed from the 2017 Member Meeting sessions, the results of which are summarised below.

Pastoral Care

A healthy Christian community is one in which people know that they are loved, visitors are welcome and young and old alike are valued and feel safe. The care that we offer, both at times of crisis and in everyday life is an active proclamation of God's love in Christ and for all the world.

The Methodist Church in Britain

The scope of our discussion

During the September 2017 members' meeting, we spent time considering the best way to ensure that pastoral care can be delivered efficiently in our Church. The discussion focused around the following questions:

- *What would be the advantages and disadvantages of splitting the church into geographical segments with a member of the pastoral care team overseeing each segment?*
- *If we follow this model what would the role of the pastoral care rep be and should we link home groups or other groups to these segments?*
- *How can we help and encourage people from other ethnic backgrounds to integrate into the fellowship?*
- *Ideas for social events to encourage community cohesion*

What you've said to us

There was a broad acceptance that "segments" could be a good way forward. Concerns focused on the logistics of ensuring that each segment represented a range of people with a range of needs. Some people were concerned that we may find that particular segments had significantly more needs or more resources than others.

Advantages were that people living close to each other can get to know each other easier and be encouraged to care and pray for each other. Social events could be organised to further

encourage this. It would create a single point of contact in each area and consistent support for those in need. The pastoral care rep can then signpost people to where they can find help

It was strongly felt that home groups should be linked to a segment. Suggestions to consider how to integrate other groups e.g. pram club, luncheon club. Specific ministries could also be linked to segments. Positive attitudes should prevail: Welcoming, affirming love. Be there and be genuine. Have a positive regard for all

What will happen next?

- Further discussions will take place in the Pastoral Care Team to discuss how we create effective segments
- A range of practical suggestions will be discussed and actioned if appropriate eg Badges and photos of Pastoral Care team, ways to integrate other cultures, training in different aspects of pastoral care,
- Questionnaire distributed to identify how people could help.

Prayer

During the Church members meeting on 28th September 2017 a presentation was given promoting prayer triplets and the prayer emails. A time of discussion followed looking at prayer at GHBC and ways in which we could improve the prayer life within the fellowship.

Points from MM	How to implement	Current position
Sunday service prayer focus		Happens regularly throughout the year
Prayer time available after the service	Currently available if requested	Available on request
Prayer coordinator in all groups	Needs teams to appoint a prayer coordinator.	
Prayer cards available at events	Use prayer cards more regularly in services	
Advertise the prayer email <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That it is available to sign up to • That people can request prayer 	* See below	Take up for the prayer emails has increased. Prayer requests and updates been received.
Prayer requests in the fellowship offering bag	Possible but longwinded process.	Best options speak to someone or email the request.
Prayer book		
Flip chart to add prayer requests on arrival to church		Purchased and used
Publicise hour of prayer		Always in the weekly and on website
Prayer for our children & YP - stones	Trevor and Tina have this in hand Are there any child protection or data issues?	
Physical prayers – picking out a name or a subject on something e.g. pebble	Worship leaders need to take this on board for some services.	
Our attitude to prayer, for ourselves	Personal	Sermons on prayer in autumn 2017
An open invitation to give feedback after prayer such as Tina C did		You only have to ask!
Not just feedback but follow up, An email is sent and then nothing often for days, especially when something serious has happened.	Dependent on receiving updates, difficult when a person/family is under sudden stress. For long term “known” issues a link person can supply regular updates.	Has improved see above
Send out a prayer digest or round up of the week's requests and feedback.		The visual team have projected a roundup of prayer requests as part of the pre-service notices.

Points from MM	How to implement	Current position
Why are the home groups not advertised in the weekly?	*Could we combine this with advertising the prayer emails by having A5 flyers with home group details on one side and prayer email information on the other? A supply ready to give out.	
Look at an additional telephone chain for those not online.	Need to find out who would like to receive information but can't, plus who already is a link to someone in this situation. Extend the "buddy" system	At present an ad hoc system with some passing on requests to those that are not online.

Discipleship

The scope of our discussion

As a leadership team, we identified discipleship as a core area of our church, and an area that we felt we needed to invest in. We recognised that if we are to take seriously our faith, and if we are to follow the calling God has given us as both a church and individuals, then we would need to invest in how we journey together, how we support one another and how we grow closer to God.

During the October 2017 members' meeting, we spent a chunk of time looking at three questions to do with discipleship:

- *What does discipleship mean to you?*
- *What does discipleship look like in GHBC?*
- *What could we improve upon to enable strong discipleship?*

What you've said to us

As a result of our discussion, it was felt discipleship had a number of different factors: meeting in groups (from twos and threes to larger groups), personal attitudes, looking to the example Jesus and sharing and supporting one another.

There was a recognition that GHBC was doing quite a lot across these factors. There was a sense that we offer a range of home groups, that mentoring was starting to become a thing, and that there was a real family and community feel to what we do. That through involvement in the different facets of church life there are opportunities to support one another, and grow as we study scripture, pray and challenge one another.

However it was also shared that there were several gaps. Whilst mentoring has shown signs of life, the perception is there is a lot more we can be doing with it. We have gaps within our children and young people's work - how are we discipling them? What of those who are new to faith - how are we nurturing them? There was a sense that we could be doing more to foster an environment of service, of sharing our faith with each other and also a desire to have a more direct and personal challenge through our teaching.

What will happen next

In the coming months we will:

- Develop a teaching series on real life matters, on how we can grow in our faith (this has already started)
- Develop a resource hub that contains books, magazines and other helpful resources that will aid and assist personal spiritual growth and nourishment

- Look into a number of mentoring programmes, with a view to adopting, formalising and actively encouraging a thriving mentoring programme here at GHBC

Evangelism

The scope of our discussion

Go, the 'Great Commission', Jesus' last command or evangelism. Whatever we call it, Jesus calls us to do it – to share the Good News of salvation, forgiveness and grace with those around us.

At our November Members meeting we asked three questions about evangelism to reflect on the activities we run to reach out into the Gorse Hill community:

1. What is 'evangelism'? What does it mean to 'evangelise'?
2. How can we evangelise, even if we're not 'evangelists'?
3. How do we, and how can we, bring the gospel to Gorse Hill?

What you've said to us

Our breakout discussions started by but covering the fact that we aren't all called to be evangelists! But reflecting on our motto text for 2017 from Romans 12, we recognised that we are all called to live out our faith in an authentic way, to stand out wherever we are and to enthusiastically proclaim the name of Jesus Christ: to personally evangelise.

Whilst we recognised that GHBC has a longstanding history of engaging with the Gorse Hill community regularly, there was the feeling that we could still do more! Building on the relationships we've made, sharing our faith in a personal and meaningful way, equipping each other with confidence and knowledge of our faith through discipleship, at the same time as also providing the key materials and relevant resources.

We also shared challenges of; how do we remain relevant in our activities, how do we avoid a 'this is just what we do as a church' mentality without remembering why we run these activities, and ensuring people actually know what activities are running.

What will happen next

So what now? Well, in the coming months we'll look to:

- Continue our outreach activities, looking at new ways in which we can encourage Christ centred conversations through discipling one another, but also by providing materials such as magazines or 'Thought for the Day' cards for our weekly activities as conversation starters.
- Big evangelistic events! Refresh the Summer Festival and create events at Easter and Christmas that you can bring friends to – watch this space.
- Look at re-envisioning our social media, connecting with the local community in a relevant way to tell people the great events we have and more importantly, the great news of Jesus Christ we have to share.