CHURCH DEVELOPMENT GROUP– MAY 2018 – Note of Meeting

1. Ian gave some feedback from the last meeting
   1. The closure over Easter didn’t happen and he had not heard back from Susan about joining Mastrick for worship. There would be closures in the summer.
   2. Windmill Centre is not available for a church weekend until April 2019 and costs minimum of £500 per night.
2. **We began with a biblical reflection on the “One Another’s” of the New Testament** in order to give our discussion some biblical context. We asked the question: “For a Christian Community to have the sort of character suggested by the ‘one anothers’, what sort of practices would it need to have?”

Six ‘essential practises’ emerged from the discussion:

* Praying together
* Learning from/studying the Bible together
* Worshiping together: in particular celebrating baptism and communion together
* Serving together
* Eating together
* Being together in a way that allowed the sharing of one another’s ongoing story.

1. **Moving from A to B: a reminder of what and why.** “B” is a network of interdependent small congregations where people help one another to follow Jesus. Each one is shapedbythe *Shared Vision (*of being a community that helps one another follow Jesus and having the sort of character that is seen in the community centre and Stocket Grange congregations). “A” is what we have now: where Stocket Grange and Woodhill Court are dependent on the Community Centre Congregation. We started this process because “A” was stagnating and we recognise that we can do “A” better. It isn’t so much that we want to leave A but we want A to develop into B. This is Primarily because A is both something we want to share and, because of its size, a barrier to others becoming part of a community which helps them become faithful followers of Jesus.
2. **A closer look at B: we firstly thought about what the long term vision of a number of congregations would require.** In order to help one another follow Jesus what would each congregation require? In addition to the 6 practices outlined above our discussion also came up with:

* A space to meet (with such things as a toilet and a kitchen!)
* A specified time(s) to meet
* Resources, materials and/or trained people who could enable Bible teaching/study
* A “seed group” who would initiate the new congregation
* A group/person who would lead/facilitate/co-ordinate the new congregation
* Money
* A particular focus with regards to who it was reaching out to (e.g “target specific ages”)
* Commitment from those involved

**We then thought about what the consequences of this might be for the Community Centre congregation.**

Our discussion recognised that the Community Centre congregation would almost certainly have to provide the ‘seed group’ and leadership. That would mean a loss of people in the Community Centre including the potential loss of ‘key people’. We thought that it was probably more important to prepare people for the change/loss than to prepare people to ‘take over’. Our experience is that the congregation is adaptable and that when ‘gaps’ appear others fill those gaps in their own way.

We realised that there would almost certainly be a change in the relationship between the Community Centre and Ian/the minister. We weren’t entirely sure what that would entail. The minister would have a relationship with all the congregations in terms of the conducting of communion and baptism. The minister/Ian may or may not be part of a ‘seed group’.

We realised that there is a question about the Community Centre’s place within the ‘network’ of congregations. Is it the ‘hub’ at the centre of the network, or an equal partner (and potentially not the strongest/main congregation)? We thought that it would almost inevitably be at the centre of what we are doing in terms of training, support, leadership etc. This threw up a further question regarding overall leadership of the various congregations.

1. **In order to get from A to B we have identified 4 areas that we need to focus on: ‘Doing What We Do Better’; ‘Growing as Christians’; ‘Leadership Development’; ‘Mission’.** 
   1. We thought about things that have developed in the church over the last few months which are helping the church to develop towards B?

We felt that there had been a lot of good things happening in the church and that these are signs that the church is no longer stagnating but the waters are at least trickling if not flowing. Those good things included: Community Bible Experience; developments in Stocket Grange; more people leading worship; Make Lunch; Prayers for Healing coming under the church banner; increase in small groups; Church Development Group; etc

* 1. We thought about what we might do over the next little while in each of the four areas that would help us to move from A to B (keeping in mind our shared vision) and came up with the following:

Doing what we do better: Training in leading prayers/leading from the front; freshening up the worship space; returning to use of candles or other response activities; a small group at Woodhill Court; connecting with other churches.

Growing as Christians: Finish CBE; do the next steps in CBE; courses for the whole church; Alpha type ‘follow on’ course.

Leadership Development: get more people involved; leadership training course; find out what other churches are doing and partner with them.

Mission: Youth; homeless/untouchables; training in mission; Alpha; find out what other churches are doing and join in with them

**We thought about which of these we could do and what other next steps we needed to take.** We decided that a workshop which gave training in leading prayers and doing other ‘upfront’ things on a Sunday morning would be helpful. We agreed that there were 4 ‘next steps’ to put in place**:**

1. Prayers etc workshop
2. Re-instate the small group to facilitate the Church Development Group meetings
3. Organise a Church Weekend Away
4. Organise a Sunday morning after church Church Meeting before the summer
5. In addition Ian has already committed to running an Alpha Course in autumn 2018 and is putting together a small group to organise it.

We agreed that it was our collective responsibility to make sure these things happened. Everyone is asked to email Ian stating which of these they would be willing to help organise.

Ian Aitken May 2018