CHURCH DEVELOPMENT GROUP MEETING – AUGUST 30 2018

We spent most of the meeting reviewing the notes of the last meeting and the congregation conference in July. This led to some significant conversations.

Ian noted that many of the things which had been noted as evidence of progress and development in the church had shown themselves to be very fragile. The things noted 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” (note of meeting May 2018).

In particular a discussion about worship leading in the Community Centre Congregation helped us to understand that we have experienced ‘gaps being filled’ when they occur. There is a tendency to want to try and train and prepare people to lead worship to a particular standard (which is a good thing) but we should be comfortable allowing people to be involved at their own level and as they can. We should ‘celebrate what we have’. The image of a family eating together rather than us gathering for a fancy meal was used. In practical terms we should be willing at times to let people simply choose songs they like, use CDs, have community groups prepare worship, or even not have any formal worship. This isn’t simply ‘making do’ but part of the culture of simplicity, participation and community.

The Church Conference had discussed building strong relationships because we have identified that as a key thing that allows us to develop as a church. We had a discussion about what we meant by strong relationships. We recognised that that meant different things to different people but that being disciples of Jesus meant becoming people who were increasingly trustworthy, accepting, forgiving and loving. There are certain practices and tools which help in that – these were identified by the congregation conference (shared purpose, Community Groups, common background, social media, unspoken support, intentional connectors, opportunities to meet, culture of openness).

In particular the Conference had looked at the place of breakfast and how to strengthen its place in the church. We thought that there were some things we could do that might help: saying grace before breakfast is served (and making it repetitive); not serving breakfast till 10.35; constantly retelling the story/purpose of breakfast. At the same time we felt that we shouldn’t put too much on to it and that people should feel free to opt in or out. This is true of all parts of the service: worship, sharing, sermon etc.

OTHER QUESTIONS/ISSUES WE DIDN’T HAVE TIME TO DISCUSS

* Next Congregation Conference is the 16th September. How should we be using that? Is it time to share the bigger vision of “B” to put things into context?
* Are there specific goals around the 4 Areas of Development that we can put in place?
* Is the long term goal for have a ‘seed group’ for a new congregation? At what point should we be putting such a group together? Is it reasonable to aim for a second congregation in 5 years time?
* Do we need to add to the Church Development Group?

Next Meeting – 13 September