**REPORT FROM CONGREGATION MEETING SEPTEMBER 2018**

**The meeting began with a follow up from the last conversation in July** where we talked about strengthening relationships and in particular the place of breakfast. In light of that conversation we are going to try not serving breakfast till 10.35 with a grace being said/sung before we serve. A second grace will be said/sung at the time of giving the two-minute warning. We’re also going to keep ‘telling the story’ of why we have breakfast together. It may be helpful to have similar conversations about all the elements of Sunday morning.

**The discussion about breakfast wasn’t just a small random thing** but it is part of a wider discussion about the strengthening of our relationship. That discussion is part of the process of our “doing what we do better”. That in turn is part of a wider development of the church in the 4 areas of “doing what we do better”, “growing as Christians”, “leadership development” and “mission”. Which is all about our moving from A to B.

**Ian then took some time to outline an idea of what B might look like** if A represents how things are now and B represents the possible future that God is leading us to. The reasons for believing that we need to go from A to B are two-fold. It stands to reason that we are always developing as a church – we’re not perfect and God has more for us! But we have also over the last couple of years felt a call by God to move from A to B because there was a sense of stagnation and a sense that God had something more for us.

The move from A to B has often be represented by a straight line which implies leaving A behind and journeying to B. There is some merit in this picture because there are inevitably some things which we need to leave behind (things which are bad and things which we treasure) and it is important to value B as worth striving for. But the straight line analogy is unhelpful in that it implies leaving everything about A behind. We do not want to do that – in fact the very opposite. A better picture is one of A growing into B.

B

A

B

A

**The picture of the possible future Ian outlined is of a church made up of a number of small congregations where people can belong to a loving Christian community and which helps each other grow as Christians.**







In this picture of a possible future, the Community Centre Congregation will remain a community of around 50 – 70 people with the same sort of culture and feeling. But if that was all that the future contained, we would be limiting ourselves in terms of mission. We would not grow beyond 70 people.

So in the picture of the possible future there are basically more community centre type congregations. They might not worship in the same way, or learn from the bible in the same way, or care for one another in the same way. But they will do all of those things – and they will do it as a small community of people trying to help each other faithfully follow Jesus.

Ian explained that what he was describing was just a sketch without any of the detail being worked out. We do already have some sense of what this might look like in that we have 3 congregations in the church: but Woodhill Court, and to a slightly lesser extent, Stocket Grange, are both dependent upon the Community Centre congregation. We probably could not sustain many more such congregation.

In this picture of a possible future though, we’re talking about a group of congregations which together make up Stocekthill Church and are interdependent.

**We then took time to discuss four questions. The following is a summary of the answers:**

**What about the vision makes you nervous?**

Feeling Separate

how we can be sure it will work

Changes

Diluting the message

Will everyone have a shared vision/purpose and belief?

Confusions e.g. about grace etc

People still doing the same as they do now

Nothing

Families, where do they fit?

Financial implications

Communication issues

Isolation

Unknown

**What about the vision excites you?**

GROWTH

New blood

Trying to change

Help the community

Smaller church, sizes

Prospect of it happening

New people skills (leaders)

New relationships

Expanding networks

Create new opportunities

Becoming more prayerful (daily), (grace)

Our uniqueness

Giving God the space for moving on

**How do we need to pray?**

Separately and together

Expectantly: giving room to God to make changes, having eyes open for God at work, recognising when the answer is “No”, “look elsewhere”, or “yes” -but scary.

Specific things: what are the issues, questions? Where are we up to? Ideas need gelled then communicated

The other 3 questions and how people are thinking, feeling and reacting.

For understanding

Vision: what is B in practice?

Guidance (very important)

Significant scriptures for us e.g. Is45 to remind us of who we are

To remember this is not a business plan, but Christ’s family

With lots of ongoing prompts and reminders e.g. stuff to take home, stones, card on fridge, in wallet, prayers written out, to be used and re-used

Focus

**What practical questions about the vision do you have?**

Encouraging and equipping new leaders for more congregations

Finding the right ‘team’ or group to go with a leader

How big does a starter group need to be? and what skills are needed?

Meeting space, time of meeting

What will distinguish each congregation? Different callings

How much will it cost? Who pays?

Timing: when to start a new group?

How far from here geographically will/ can we go?

How will the separate groups stay connected to one another?