

# **A Mission Strategy for the Parish of Cramlington**

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## **Cramlington Parish Mission Strategy**

### **Introduction**

Dave Baker and Peter Shelley were asked in October 2013 to produce a mission strategy for the Parish of Cramlington. Due to personal circumstances the collaboration was cut short in early November; this paper is an attempt to respond to the initial request by providing a 'straw man' for discussion. It has not been possible to offer it for extensive review before the leaders meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014; we apologise for any deficiencies it contains as a result.

Our remit was 'mission strategy' but it became clear after initial discussions that we could not look at mission only; it cannot be seen as an 'add-on' to the normal running of church but must be integrated in the totality of church life. Otherwise we could face illogicalities, such as bringing in numbers of new believers into an organisation which cannot handle the influx. We felt it important to ask questions such as 'who will help these new believers grow in faith?', 'who will look after them?', 'how will they cope when the first enthusiasm wears off?' – questions which must have answers in how we do church, not just how we do mission.

We present a number of options for taking forward the necessary changes and, within these options offer one with detailed recommendations. This is intended to be a strategy document so we have not gone down to the level of creating specific plans for each recommended area of work.

We approached this project knowing that words such as 'strategy', 'vision' and 'review' will produce adverse reactions in many; truly, we have 'been there', 'tried it before' and know it will be 'a waste of energy'. So we have devoted some time to considering the 'how' of making change happen and included some recommendations on this topic.

We'd like to stress that effective change happens over years. A key element in change which can't simply be planned is the change in culture; in this case, becoming a highly successful, confident, outward-facing and involved expression of God's love for our community.

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### Our method

Our starting point was to observe that the church is not growing in proportion to the hard work and efforts of many faithful people through the years. Another way of expressing this is to say that for all the number of people coming through the church, very few choose to stay with us. Is there something we are missing? Are we failing these people in some way? We decided to review our organisation to see if our provision was lacking:

1. We identified the key components – or processes - of an individual’s journey of faith (with thanks to many internet sites) as: Evangelism, Integration, Discipleship.
  - a. Evangelism – this includes ‘being the good news’ with mercy ministries, like food bank, and ‘telling the good news’ via individual witness, sermons and special events. Evangelism takes the individual from being unchurched and not knowing about God through to initial commitment to Christ.
  - b. Integration – this sees individual seekers/believers welcomed into small groups where they can explore their new-found faith and build relationships with the family of God. These relationships are critical in keeping young Christians through doubts and difficulties.
  - c. Discipleship – building on growing faith, this seeks to establish Christians as true followers of Christ; faithful in prayer, giving and growing in gifts and new ministries, becoming the leaders of the emerging church.

The key point to notice is that if any of the 3 systems are missing, the whole process eventually falls:

- Without evangelism the church population can only remain static; but age and mortality reduces it year on year.
- Without integration, meaningful relationships don’t develop well and are easily broken when put under pressure; young Christians fall away in the first months.
- Without discipleship, the church remains immature and individual Christians do not grow and develop their ministry within the Body of Christ.

We then reviewed the way in which the parish organisation met these.

2. We identified the key processes required to support our mission (the bringing of individuals to faith and ultimately discipleship) as:
  - a. Finance. This includes all aspects of giving, fund-raising, setting and monitoring budgets.
  - b. Administration. Efficient processes for secretarial support, bookings etc
  - c. Fabric. Care for existing and future buildings.
  - d. Resources. Both manpower and materials.
  - e. Communication. Ensuring that the right messages are given, in the right way, to the right people, using appropriate mechanisms.
3. We reviewed all church groups to see how they fitted against the lifeshapes ‘triangle’. This assesses the health of any Christian group by looking at how it relates to God; how it relates

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to the 'church' family; and how it relates to the unchurched community. We believe that these relationships should be active, not passive; and reflected in the church organisation. Lasting weakness in any – or all - of these 3 areas must be addressed or it will threaten the health of the whole group; we suggest a formal review using the form shown at Appendix 1).

4. We looked at the provision for all age ranges in the parish – from cradle to grave - and also how the transition from one age group to another is managed (eg Little Fishes to Sunday School to youth group to adult). It's obvious that any failure in this provision could cause us to lose people. We believe that the parish needs to recognise that gaps in this process will be a serious issue which it must 'own'.

In each of these reviews we also sought to consult with individuals in the parish.

5. We also considered methods of introducing change and sought expert opinion on this. Probably our most significant source is a book by Jim Collins, entitled 'Good to Great', in which a team of researchers reviewed a number of companies whose performance had been transformed from good to great and identified areas of commonality between them. We also drew on a number of publications and messages from representatives of highly successful churches and Christian organisations.

[An extended quotation from Good to Great is shown at Appendix 2 and we suggest you read this before moving on]

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### Observations

Our observations are purposely not focussed on the many good points which our parish displays, but looks more at the gaps and weaknesses which need to be addressed if we are to 'reap' an appropriate harvest from our combined efforts. We hope this doesn't appear too negative!

#### 1 Evangelism.

- a. The church seems ready to embrace any initiatives to be good news in the community via mercy ministries such as the food bank; this is a healthy sign and shows the willingness of the church to reach out into the community where need is identified.
- b. We see very little evidence of the church telling the good news in appropriate places and contexts (ie not necessarily in a church building). We believe that this should be the main key to inspiring faith in unchurched people.
- c. The 'next step' proposed for most enquirers is generally a suggestion that they continue to attend church; we don't see this as addressing their needs, which are more about starting relationships and friendship and finding Christ as Saviour and Lord.
- d. When visitors come to church they are made welcome at the door and frequently engaged in conversation, but there is no process for them to register interest in church life, meet a church family informally, or sign up for a seekers course.

#### 2 Integration happens, but not for everyone – it's not planned or organised.

- a. Pastoral care is readily available, but it tends to be on a reactive basis; in other words, anyone who wants help must ask for it. This addresses some pastoral issues, but doesn't (for instance) cover situations where people hit problems and stop coming to church; or are depressed and unwilling to ask for help; or are stepping outside the bounds of behaviour expected in a representative of the parish.
- b. With notable exceptions, there doesn't seem to be a widespread culture of inviting people into homes, yet this is often the first and best step in developing key relationships and can continue to provide valuable support on the journey of faith.
- c. There are a few small groups in the parish, in which people can explore their faith and develop firm relationships. The people who attend these seem to flourish. Apart from occasional Alpha courses (which are probably more appropriate to evangelism) we don't see anything planned and designed for new Christians, nor any strategy to include them in existing groups.

#### 3 Discipleship is spoken about and encouraged but there is no recognisable and consistent approach to this.

- a. With the exception of lay reader training, there is no planned training to permit specific roles, ministries and gifts to be developed.
- b. Apart from the small groups already mentioned, there is little context in which such roles, ministries and gifts can be developed and exercised.
- c. There is no defined mentoring and coaching process for those wishing to grow into these roles.

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- d. We sense some hesitation in presenting Godly principles of discipleship – regular prayer, Bible reading, giving, lifestyle etc
  
- 4 Support processes – finance. Finance is the most discussed topic at PCC meetings; this reflects a general preoccupation with meeting the demands of the parish share and doing church. A parish giving group is looking at ways of increasing the funds raised by giving; this may need to take a more radical approach if a new mission budget is required.
  
- 5 Support processes - administration. Secretarial support is provided; we question whether increasing this support might make more valuable clergy time available.
  
- 6 Support processes - fabric. Responsibility for fabric is clearly identified (with minor grey areas).
  
- 7 Support processes - resources. It's hard to see how skills are recognised and made available – this appears to be on a word-of-mouth basis. Similarly, it seems that equipment and other resources are obtained for each group rather than being seen as parish assets; there may be duplication in some areas.
  
- 8 Support processes - communication. The most frequent comment we encountered was 'we are really bad at communication', yet the basics are in place: periodic newsletters, a parish website and 'notices' in every service. Perhaps most noticeable by their absence are the 'good news' stories of times when individuals or groups have something to celebrate. There is no mechanism to direct communications to specific groups nor are there identifiable owners for various communications. A small number of people seem to have embraced the various publicity opportunities afforded by social media, newspaper and radio but we don't seem to have tapped into these skills very well.
  
- 9 Sphere of activity (the lifeshapes triangle)
  - a. It is clear that the parish is active in maintaining the 'up' relationship with God via services, prayer meetings, group studies.
  - b. The 'in' relationship which majors on the church family is effective for church members of long-standing, who have developed informal relationships via coffee after services, socials, fund-raising and groups – though, as noted above, we would question the effectiveness of pastoral provision. It seems hard for the unchurched to break into these established relationships and networks. While we understand that relationships can't be made to happen, we see the lack of any mechanism or responsibility for facilitating them to be a significant omission.

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- c. The 'out' relationship with the community is mainly represented by events in church to which people are invited. This is probably a matter of culture as much as preference; there is little in the way of models in the parish for engaging with the community other than the invitational one. We see this as a weakness, believing that the changes in society over recent years mean that our emphasis should be on engagement with the unchurched in the community.

This concludes our observations relating to the existing church organisation, however we also include a few observations about change which inform our recommendations later:

**10** Managing change. The key elements in successful business change – and which are appropriate to any organisation - seem to be:

- a. Incremental change works much better than 'big bang'; change announced with a fanfare, and promising bright futures, normally ends in disillusionment. The cycle of new strategy followed by failure repeats itself over years; this means that people never settle to consistent delivery of results and have a suspicion of new initiatives.
- b. Getting the right people in leadership positions (ie the PCC?) is more significant than getting the strategy right. Passionate, dedicated people will always deliver tremendous results regardless of the strategy. Bill Hybels calls this 'hiring the 10s' (Axioms).
- c. Facilitative leadership works best; in great companies there are no superstars. Successful leaders maintain a persistent commitment to an agreed goal; they are able to communicate this goal in the simplest language and they do so at every opportunity.

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### **Options**

Given the observations presented above, we now offer 4 options which provide the context in which identified shortfalls can be addressed. The choice of option will dictate the potential effectiveness of the parish in years to come; but the greater potential offers the greater challenge.

#### **Option 1 – do nothing**

This option should always be the first to be explored; in effect, if we continue as we are now will we be in a better position in 5-10-25 years than we will be if we make significant change, with all the effort and destabilisation that will incur? ‘Do nothing’ would involve the congregations which make up the Anglican church in Cramlington continuing to do as they do now. This is attractive in that it does not require increased resources – finance, fabric or people – but it is of limited success in growing church and extending the church’s influence into the community. The model of church used is self-limiting and could not handle extensive growth. For these reasons, we reject Option 1, seeing the challenge of Cramlington as a God-given mission worthy of the effort of change.

#### **Option 2 – enhance existing organisation**

This option identifies the gaps in our ‘cradle to grave’ provision for the journey of faith – identified in Observations 1-9 above and seeks to address these (including managing the transition from group to group over an individual’s lifetime in church); it provides clearer responsibilities for evangelism, integration and discipleship; and it changes the responsibilities of the PCC to recognise the need for oversight of spiritual matters. This is a very attractive option and looks ‘safe’ – however, it again limits the influence of the church and hence its ability to grow; it depends on clergy for leadership of key groups and hence fails to provide a multipliable model for growth. If we’re only looking to run a successful church it’s an acceptable option; if we want to respond to the challenge of the 40,000 souls in Cramlington it’s woefully inadequate. For this reason we reject this option.

#### **Option 3 – immediately change our organisation to a mission-based one**

This option is effectively the ‘big bang’ approach to change and requires the whole church to move to a new structure based on mission in the community. It is attractive to those who are radically challenged by the command to ‘go and make disciples’ and probably would, over time, produce a mission-focussed church. How successful it would be in the longer term is debatable. Our concern is that high-impact change would create division and cause great hurt to faithful members of our congregations. Also, research shows that major change introduced in this fashion is usually ineffective (see ‘Good to Great’ at Appendix 2). For this reason this option is rejected.

#### **Option 4 (preferred solution) – combine options 2 and 3 to provide a migration path to mission-focussed church**

This option addresses the gaps in existing faith provision; begins to address culture change in existing congregations; and opens up a channel for mission which is integrated within the overall parish but which, in future, is expandable and multipliable. It offers an opportunity for long-term culture change without alienating existing church members and permits the process of change to be gradual and persistent without jeopardising or delaying our commitment to mission. We strongly prefer this option and offer a number of recommendations to implement it.



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### **Recommendations**

These are split into 2 groups; the first 4 relate to changes to the existing church culture and organisation to make it more outward-facing, more engaged with the community; more likely to retain the contacts made by outreach and evangelism; and to begin the process of culture change to mission focussed church. The second group of 4 relate to new initiatives in mission and how these can be linked into an organisation which is manageable and which preserves our unique identity, mission and unity. These together provide a model which retains all that is good about our church while offering an expandable and multipliable organisation focussed on mission.

#### **Recommendation 1 – Encourage existing groups to engage with unchurched people**

We recommend that all existing groups and congregations should be asked to meet, pray and produce plans which will enable them to engage (or engage more fully) with the unchurched. The plan should include specific objectives, costs, training requirements and timescales.

It should be clear that this is about making ongoing relationships with the unchurched and should involve church members going into the community rather than asking the unchurched to come to church.

This recommendation is also about beginning a change in culture, requiring prayer and leadership from clergy both in sermons and personal relationships.

#### **Recommendation 2 – Review parish-wide provision for the individual's faith journey; identify gaps in provision; appoint leaders (or 'champions') for each stream; produce and implement plan to fill the gaps.**

We recommend that the PCC appoints a leader (and deputy) to 'own' each area – evangelism, integration and discipleship; they will be tasked with proposing a parish-wide plan for addressing the shortfalls and exploiting existing strengths; this should include timescale, training requirements and cost. We'd suggest that the leaders should be members of the PCC.

This is a substantial piece of work and will start with a discussion at PCC of what we understand and intend by evangelism, integration and discipleship. Are we here to encourage church attendance or commitment to Christ? To invite people to be disciples or spectators? To run a successful church or fulfil the Great Commission? (We're being deliberately provocative as we believe that agreement on these areas will be a challenging task and may raise issues which we will find difficult to handle – yet agreement is key to success here).

[We believe that pastoral provision requires further discussion and it may be helpful to add this as a 4<sup>th</sup> stream, similarly represented on the PCC]

#### **Recommendation 3 – review parish-wide provision for all ages (including transition management)**

We propose a review of faith provision by age/and life events to identify any gaps; we believe that it is impossible for any one of our churches or congregations to provide for all ages within the existing organisational structure, hence it must be a united parish-wide review; this, more than anything, will challenge our commitment to unity.

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We therefore recommend that one person plus deputy be asked to propose a parish-wide plan for addressing the shortfalls and exploiting existing strengths; this should include timescale, training requirements and cost. This is a one-off project rather than an ongoing one, so we don't believe it is necessary for the leader to be a PCC member.

### **Recommendation 4 – define set of core values for the parish and communicate these clearly and consistently**

At the moment, we find it difficult to vocalise the identity of the parish – what do we agree on? What are we proud of? How would we describe the parish to an outsider? This all relates to culture and values, which must be agreed by all church members. The significance of culture change should not be underestimated, clearly any mission strategy will founder if it is unsupported by the church membership. This in turn requires a heartfelt unity of love and purpose; rather than try to get members to sign up to a set of rules and regulations we'd recommend unity based on values. The PCC should set these values and communicate them. As a straw man, we include those used by St Thomas, Philadelphia (in Sheffield) – shortened examples shown at Appendix 3.

See also Recommendation 7 below.

### **Recommendation 5 – model a missional group which fulfils all faith journey processes**

While we recommend a steady and consistent movement of existing congregations and groups to a culture and practice which is more outward-focussed and inclusive of the unchurched (Recommendations 1-3 above) we also recognise that a traditional building-based church is unlikely to have serious missional impact on the community of Cramlington. We aspire to be the church in the community and this requires us to live our lives of love in the community. There are many models for this, but we recommend (as a straw man) that we look at 'missional communities' – based on friendship groups, vocational networks and specific geographic areas.

Our reasoning is that these missional communities fully cover the faith journey process from first contact through to discipleship; they include the key activities of evangelism, teaching, pastoral care, discipleship without any external support; they are multipliable (ie one group can produce many groups which in turn produce many groups) so can handle a plentiful 'harvest'; and input from existing clergy leadership is limited to pastoral oversight of the group leaders.

We recommend that at least two potential group leaders are given appropriate training to lead a missional group; training provided by 3DM is suggested and the book 'Leading Missional Communities' would give valuable background information to PCC members. There are some big questions to debate:

- Could St Andrews be already positioned to become the first of these communities?
- Would St Peters want to move to this model?
- Would the proposed teatime church work as an all-age missional community?

[Please also see Recommendation 8 for PCC responsibilities to license such communities]

### **Recommendation 6 - model an organisation which supports missional groups**

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We expect that the missional communities will handle most of the burden of bringing people to faith and pastoring them into the next generation of disciples and leaders. The next challenge is in organising the parish to support these groups. We recommend that:

- Key responsibilities which should remain with the 'centre' include finance, fabric, communication, publicity, administration.
- All missional group leaders should meet together on a weekly basis as a group with a clergy pastor/mentor who represents the parish and is on the leadership team (PCC) to discuss and pray through personal and practical issues.
- We expect that missional groups will 'do' church where they are planted, so their members should not attend our church building-based Sunday services. There is a danger that this will isolate them and create an artificial split in the church; for this reason we recommend that a monthly or bi-monthly all-parish service should be run. This will enable the whole church body to unite in worship and give opportunity for any directional teaching and key messages to be delivered to the whole church.

### **Recommendation 7 – culture change via multiple inputs**

Culture change is vital to our future; it is an enormous task but must be undertaken if the parish is to grow in numbers and quality of life. It has particular significance as we start to undertake mission, as those we bring into the church will adopt the existing culture. We recommend that:

- 1 A series of sermons on core values be presented to all congregations
- 2 Leaders model proposed culture, based on core values
- 3 Housegroups work on understanding and modelling these values in action
- 4 John Brierley be asked to advise, plan and lead (if possible) on continuing culture change.

### **Recommendation 8 – set up PCC meetings to support revised organisation**

We recommend that the PCC should meet 8 times a year:

- 1 A quarterly meeting to review, plan, direct all business matters (including finance, fabric, communication, publicity, relationship with diocese etc). The meeting will review agreed objectives against plans, strategy and core values. Attendees will include clergy team and business leaders (treasurer, wardens etc) i.e.

Clergy 1 - leads meeting (or would this be better lay-led?)

Clergy 2 - Group manager

Secretary - administration

Treasurer - finance

Churchwardens - fabric

Communications

Resources

- 2 A quarterly meeting to review, plan, direct all spiritual matters (evangelism, outreach, integration, discipleship, prayer, worship) . The meeting will review quarterly reports against strategy, objectives and values. This will also be the body which licenses new

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missional groups, reviewing proposals against core values and strategy, approving new costs incurred for training etc. We also suggest an annual exercise to ask 'what should we stop doing?' – highly successful organisations will stop spending time, money and energy on unproductive work, so should we. Attendees will include clergy team and all 'spiritual' team leaders i.e.

Clergy - leads meeting

Treasurer

Secretary

Missional group manager

Leaders of:

- Evangelism
- Integration
- Discipleship
- Prayer
- Worship
- Communications

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### Risks and issues

We have identified the following risks to this strategy

#### **Risk 1 - People don't sign-up to the strategy**

It is clear that a half-hearted response to the strategy adopted by the PCC will result in its failure; however, many people will take time to convince. The period between the announcement of the strategy and a whole-hearted support of it by the congregations may be measured in years, and during this time there is a risk of division impacting the church.

Mitigation of this risk will be achieved mainly by communication and we recommend that a communication plan be developed. This should include 'talking the talk' of our strategy in sermons, newsletters and personal conversations, as well as 'walking the walk' of the strategy by key people modelling unity, outward focus and mission. We suggest that main services should include good news stories from the other groups – of people encountered, lives impacted etc. This will give sceptics a chance to assess the 'fruit' of the strategy rather than respond to perceptions of it.

#### **Risk 2 – there won't be enough skilled or trained people to implement the strategy**

The parish contains many individuals with unique gifts and abilities, we need to find better ways of identifying these and employing them. Even making use of all available gifts, there will still be a shortfall in a number of key areas. In particular, the concept of leading missional communities will require us to acquire skillsets which are unfamiliar to us. Looking further ahead, the loss of key clergy must be managed. Gaps identified pose a risk to the implementation of the strategy.

Mitigation of this risk is by training and recruiting appropriate skills; we should especially look to recruit those people who have a real passion for what we're doing, regardless of age and experience. We recommend that a resource plan is developed to show all the responsibilities and resource requirements of the adopted organisation; this should lead to a funded training plan. We also suggest the PCC considers how we can make use of voluntary workers and interns to fill gaps on a temporary basis.

#### **Risk 3 – the strategy will be too expensive to implement**

Implementing the strategy will not be a cost-neutral exercise. There is a risk that our plans will exceed our ability to raise funds; that we will end up in debt and fail in our mission.

Mitigating this risk is a major challenge to a church which is struggling to meet its financial obligations (though it has met its Parish Share in 2013 - a very encouraging sign). We believe that the Parish Giving Officer has demonstrated a method for increasing giving; we also believe that people give in response to a well-communicated 'vision'. We should produce a cost schedule to accompany the mission strategy; we recommend that this is presented to the congregations with the strategy.

#### **Risk 4 – discussion and implementation of mission strategy may destabilise existing congregations**

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Many people don't like change or challenge and will feel threatened by any talk or plans which could impact them. This could lead them to dissociate themselves from our parish. The risk is that we could hurt people and lose them if we handle this carelessly.

Mitigation is similar to that for Risk 1 and is mainly reliant on communication and consultation.

### **Issue 1 – Parish-wide Lack of unity**

Although, as a parish, we work together on many projects and pursue common aims, over the years heartfelt unity, based on love, has been eroded. This results in people withdrawing from active commitment to, and involvement in, being church. Mission strategy should not build on such foundations.

[NB This is a particular concern of Peter and may not represent an agreed issue, we note it for your consideration. Appendix 4 gives his personal account of the biblical background to this issue]

To mitigate this issue we suggest a number of steps:

1. Sermons on the theme of belonging – to God, to our Christian family, and to the community in which we live
2. Leaders to model unity in actions and words
3. A service of rededication to God, Christian family and the community
4. Culture change to include focus on unity

### **Issue 2 – we currently don't have a working 'role model' to copy or simple vision of where we're heading**

This issue probably seems relatively insignificant but it addresses our need for some sense of what we're working towards - as a motivator. Without this sort of unifying concept people tend to get lost on the way and go off at tangents to the required direction.

Mitigation of this issue is to produce a concept/vision/phrase/picture which is simple to keep in mind but which sums up direction/values/responsibility throughout the change process.

[We again recommend the Hedgehog Principle section of 'Good to Great' at Appendix 2 to stimulate discussion for the PCC]

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### Appendix 1 – Proposed form for survey of effectiveness using the relationship ‘triangle’

We’d be grateful for your help in planning our mission strategy. We’re trying to build up a picture of the different groups and congregations which make up the parish. It would be a big help if you could answer a few questions for us. To begin would you please give us your name and the name of the group you represent

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Group \_\_\_\_\_

What is the purpose or mission of the group you represent? (Just a couple of sentences, please)

What do you see as the purpose or mission of the Anglican church in Cramlington? (Again, a couple of sentences, please)

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 5 (this is our main purpose) how much does your group engage in God-focussed activities, such as prayer, worship, teaching? Please circle the appropriate number.

0      1      2      3      4      5

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 5 (this is our main purpose) how much does your group engage in building relationships inside the church, with activities such as social events, meeting together to learn, caring for church people? Please circle the appropriate number.

0      1      2      3      4      5

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 5 (this is our main purpose) how much does your group engage in building relationships outside the church, with activities such as interest groups, social events, open house? Please circle the appropriate number.

0      1      2      3      4      5

Thank you for your time; please return your form to David Baker/St Ps rep/St As rep

Peter Shelley/David Baker

### Appendix 2 Good to Great/ Fast Company by Jim Collins

Start with 1,435 good companies. Examine their performance over 40 years. Find the 11 companies that became great. Now here's how you can do it too. Lessons on eggs, flywheels, hedgehogs, buses, and other essentials of business that can help you transform your company.

I want to give you a lobotomy about change. I want you to forget everything you've ever learned about what it takes to create great results. I want you to realize that nearly all operating prescriptions for creating large-scale corporate change are nothing but myths.

The Myth of the Change Program: This approach comes with the launch event, the tag line, and the cascading activities.

The Myth of the Burning Platform: This one says that change starts only when there's a crisis that persuades "unmotivated" employees to accept the need f--or change.

The Myth of Stock Options: Stock options, high salaries, and bonuses are incentives that grease the wheels of change.

The Myth of Fear-Driven Change: The fear of being left behind, the fear of watching others win, the fear of presiding over monumental failure—all are drivers of change, we're told.

The Myth of Acquisitions: You can buy your way to growth, so it figures that you can buy your way to greatness.

The Myth of Technology-Driven Change: The breakthrough that you're looking for can be achieved by using technology to leapfrog the competition.

The Myth of Revolution: Big change has to be wrenching, extreme, painful—one big, discontinuous, shattering break.

Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Totally wrong.

Here are the facts of life about these and other change myths. Companies that make the change from good to great have no name for their transformation—and absolutely no program. They neither rant nor rave about a crisis—and they don't manufacture one where none exists. They don't "motivate" people—their people are self-motivated. There's no evidence of a connection between money and change mastery. And fear doesn't drive change—but it does perpetuate mediocrity. Nor can acquisitions provide a stimulus for greatness: Two mediocrities never make one great company. Technology is certainly important—but it comes into play only after change has already begun. And as for the final myth, dramatic results do not come from dramatic process—not if you want them to last, anyway. A serious revolution, one that feels like a revolution to those going through it, is highly unlikely to bring about a sustainable leap from being good to being great.

These myths became clear as my research team and I completed a five-year project to determine what it takes to change a good company into a great one. We systematically scoured a list of 1,435 established companies to find every extraordinary case that made a leap from no-better-than-average results to great results. How great? After the leap, a company had to generate cumulative stock returns that exceeded the general stock market by at least three times over 15 years—and it



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had to be a leap independent of its industry. In fact, the 11 good-to-great companies that we found averaged returns 6.9 times greater than the market's—more than twice the performance rate of General Electric under the legendary Jack Welch.

The surprising good-to-great list included such unheralded companies as Abbott Laboratories (3.98 times the market), Fannie Mae (7.56 times the market), Kimberly-Clark Corp. (3.42 times the market), Nucor Corp. (5.16 times the market), and Wells Fargo (3.99 times the market). One such surprise, the Kroger Co.—a grocery chain—bumped along as a totally average performer for 80 years and then somehow broke free of its mediocrity to beat the stock market by 4.16 times over the next 15 years. And it didn't stop there. From 1973 to 1998, Kroger outperformed the market by 10 times.

In each of these dramatic, remarkable, good-to-great corporate transformations, we found the same thing: There was no miracle moment. Instead, a down-to-earth, pragmatic, committed-to-excellence process—a framework—kept each company, its leaders, and its people on track for the long haul. In each case, it was the triumph of the Flywheel Effect over the Doom Loop, the victory of steadfast discipline over the quick fix. And the real kicker: The comparison companies in our study—firms with virtually identical opportunities during the pivotal years—did buy into the change myths described above—and failed to make the leap from good to great.

How change doesn't happen

Picture an egg. Day after day, it sits there. No one pays attention to it. No one notices it. Certainly no one takes a picture of it or puts it on the cover of a celebrity-focused business magazine. Then one day, the shell cracks and out jumps a chicken.

All of a sudden, the major magazines and newspapers jump on the story: “Stunning Turnaround at Egg!” and “The Chick Who Led the Breakthrough at Egg!” From the outside, the story always reads like an overnight sensation—as if the egg had suddenly and radically altered itself into a chicken.

Now picture the egg from the chicken's point of view.

While the outside world was ignoring this seemingly dormant egg, the chicken within was evolving, growing, developing—changing. From the chicken's point of view, the moment of breakthrough, of cracking the egg, was simply one more step in a long chain of steps that had led to that moment. Granted, it was a big step—but it was hardly the radical transformation that it looked like from the outside.

It's a silly analogy, but then our conventional way of looking at change is no less silly. Everyone looks for the “miracle moment” when “change happens.” But ask the good-to-great executives when change happened. They cannot pinpoint a single key event that exemplified their successful transition.

Take Walgreens. For more than 40 years, Walgreens was no more than an average company, tracking the general market. Then in 1975 (out of the blue!) Walgreens began to climb. And climb. And climb. It just kept climbing. From December 31, 1975, to January 1, 2000, \$1 invested in Walgreens beat \$1 invested in Intel by nearly two times, General Electric by nearly five times, and Coca-Cola by nearly eight times. It beat the general stock market by more than 15 times.

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I asked a key Walgreens executive to pinpoint when the good-to-great transformation happened. His answer: “Sometime between 1971 and 1980.” (Well, that certainly narrows it down!)

Walgreens’s experience is the norm for good-to-great performers. Leaders at Abbott said, “It wasn't a blinding flash or sudden revelation from above.” From Kimberly-Clark: “These things don't happen overnight. They grow.” From Wells Fargo: “It wasn't a single switch that was thrown at one time.”

We keep looking for change in the wrong places, asking the wrong questions, and making the wrong assumptions. There’s even a tendency to blame Wall Street for the “instant results” approach to change. But the companies that made the jump from good to great did so using Wall Street's own tough metric of success: a sustained leap in their stock-market performance. Wall Street turns out to be just another myth—an excuse for not doing what really works. The data doesn’t lie.

How change does happen

Now picture a huge, heavy flywheel. It’s a massive, metal disk mounted horizontally on an axle. It's about 100 feet in diameter, 10 feet thick, and it weighs about 25 tons. That flywheel is your company. Your job is to get that flywheel to move as fast as possible, because momentum—mass times velocity—is what will generate superior economic results over time.

Right now, the flywheel is at a standstill. To get it moving, you make a tremendous effort. You push with all your might, and finally you get the flywheel to inch forward. After two or three days of sustained effort, you get the flywheel to complete one entire turn. You keep pushing, and the flywheel begins to move a bit faster. It takes a lot of work, but at last the flywheel makes a second rotation. You keep pushing steadily. It makes three turns, four turns, five, six. With each turn, it moves faster, and then—at some point, you can’t say exactly when—you break through. The momentum of the heavy wheel kicks in your favor. It spins faster and faster, with its own weight propelling it. You aren't pushing any harder, but the flywheel is accelerating, its momentum building, its speed increasing.

This is the Flywheel Effect. It's what it feels like when you’re inside a company that makes the transition from good to great. Take Kroger, for example. How do you get a company with more than 50,000 people to embrace a new strategy that will eventually change every aspect of every grocery store? You don’t. At least not with one big change program.

Instead, you put your shoulder to the flywheel. That’s what Jim Herring, the leader who initiated the transformation of Kroger, told us. He stayed away from change programs and motivational stunts. He and his team began turning the flywheel gradually, consistently—building tangible evidence that their plans made sense and would deliver results.

“We presented what we were doing in such a way that people saw our accomplishments,” Herring says. “We tried to bring our plans to successful conclusions step by step, so that the mass of people would gain confidence from the successes, not just the words.”

Think about it for one minute. Why do most overhyped change programs ultimately fail? Because they lack accountability, they fail to achieve credibility, and they have no authenticity. It’s the opposite of the Flywheel Effect; it's the Doom Loop.

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Companies that fall into the Doom Loop genuinely want to effect change—but they lack the quiet discipline that produces the Flywheel Effect. Instead, they launch change programs with huge fanfare, hoping to “enlist the troops.” They start down one path, only to change direction. After years of lurching back and forth, these companies discover that they’ve failed to build any sustained momentum. Instead of turning the flywheel, they’ve fallen into a Doom Loop: Disappointing results lead to reaction without understanding, which leads to a new direction—a new leader, a new program—which leads to no momentum, which leads to disappointing results. It’s a steady, downward spiral. Those who have experienced a Doom Loop know how it drains the spirit right out of a company.

Consider the Warner-Lambert Co.—the company that we compared directly with Gillette—in the early 1980s. In 1979, Warner-Lambert told Business Week that it aimed to be a leading consumer-products company. One year later, it did an abrupt about-face and turned its sights on healthcare. In 1981, the company reversed course again and returned to diversification and consumer goods. Then in 1987, Warner-Lambert made another U-turn, away from consumer goods, and announced that it wanted to compete with Merck. Then in the early 1990s, the company responded to government announcements of pending healthcare reform and reembraced diversification and consumer brands.

Between 1979 and 1998, Warner-Lambert underwent three major restructurings—one per CEO. Each new CEO arrived with his own program; each CEO halted the momentum of his predecessor. With each turn of the Doom Loop, the company spiraled further downward, until it was swallowed by Pfizer in 2000.

In contrast, why does the Flywheel Effect work? Because more than anything else, real people in real companies want to be part of a winning team. They want to contribute to producing real results. They want to feel the excitement and the satisfaction of being part of something that just flat-out works. When people begin to feel the magic of momentum—when they begin to see tangible results and can feel the flywheel start to build speed—that’s when they line up, throw their shoulders to the wheel, and push.

And that’s how change really happens.

Disciplined people: “Who” before “what”

You are a bus driver. The bus, your company, is at a standstill, and it’s your job to get it going. You have to decide where you’re going, how you’re going to get there, and who’s going with you.

Most people assume that great bus drivers (read: business leaders) immediately start the journey by announcing to the people on the bus where they’re going—by setting a new direction or by articulating a fresh corporate vision.

In fact, leaders of companies that go from good to great start not with “where” but with “who.” They start by getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats. And they stick with that discipline—first the people, then the direction—no matter how dire the circumstances. Take David Maxwell’s bus ride. When he became CEO of Fannie Mae in 1981, the company was losing \$1 million every business day, with \$56 billion worth of mortgage loans underwater. The board desperately wanted to know what Maxwell was going to do to rescue the company.

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Maxwell responded to the “what” question the same way that all good-to-great leaders do: He told them, That’s the wrong first question. To decide where to drive the bus before you have the right people on the bus, and the wrong people off the bus, is absolutely the wrong approach.

Maxwell told his management team that there would only be seats on the bus for A-level people who were willing to put out A-plus effort. He interviewed every member of the team. He told them all the same thing: It was going to be a tough ride, a very demanding trip. If they didn’t want to go, fine; just say so. Now’s the time to get off the bus, he said. No questions asked, no recriminations. In all, 14 of 26 executives got off the bus. They were replaced by some of the best, smartest, and hardest-working executives in the world of finance.

With the right people on the bus, in the right seats, Maxwell then turned his full attention to the “what” question. He and his team took Fannie Mae from losing \$1 million a day at the start of his tenure to earning \$4 million a day at the end. Even after Maxwell left in 1991, his great team continued to drive the flywheel—turn upon turn—and Fannie Mae generated cumulative stock returns nearly eight times better than the general market from 1984 to 1999.

When it comes to getting started, good-to-great leaders understand three simple truths. First, if you begin with “who,” you can more easily adapt to a fast-changing world. If people get on your bus because of where they think it’s going, you’ll be in trouble when you get 10 miles down the road and discover that you need to change direction because the world has changed. But if people board the bus principally because of all the other great people on the bus, you’ll be much faster and smarter in responding to changing conditions. Second, if you have the right people on your bus, you don’t need to worry about motivating them. The right people are self-motivated: Nothing beats being part of a team that is expected to produce great results. And third, if you have the wrong people on the bus, nothing else matters. You may be headed in the right direction, but you still won’t achieve greatness. Great vision with mediocre people still produces mediocre results.

Disciplined thought: Fox or hedgehog?

Picture two animals: a fox and a hedgehog. Which are you? An ancient Greek parable distinguishes between foxes, which know many small things, and hedgehogs, which know one big thing. All good-to-great leaders, it turns out, are hedgehogs. They know how to simplify a complex world into a single, organizing idea—the kind of basic principle that unifies, organizes, and guides all decisions. That’s not to say hedgehogs are simplistic. Like great thinkers, who take complexities and boil them down into simple, yet profound, ideas (Adam Smith and the invisible hand, Darwin and evolution), leaders of good-to-great companies develop a Hedgehog Concept that is simple but that reflects penetrating insight and deep understanding.

What does it take to come up with a Hedgehog Concept for your company? Start by confronting the brutal facts. One good-to-great CEO began by asking, “Why have we sucked for 100 years?” That’s brutal—and it’s precisely the type of disciplined question necessary to ignite a transformation. The management climate during a leap from good to great is like a searing scientific debate—with smart, tough-minded people examining hard facts and debating what those facts mean. The point isn’t to win the debate, but rather to come up with the best answers—and, ultimately, to lock onto a Hedgehog Concept that works.

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You'll know that you're getting closer to your Hedgehog Concept when you align three intersecting circles that represent three pivotal questions: What can we be the best in the world at? (And equally important—what can we not be the best at?) What is the economic denominator that best drives our economic engine (profit or cash flow per “x”)? And what are our core people deeply passionate about? Answer those three questions honestly, facing the brutal facts without blinking, and you'll begin to see your Hedgehog Concept emerge.

For example, before Wells Fargo understood its Hedgehog Concept, its leaders had tried to make it a global bank: It operated like a mini-Citicorp—and a mediocre one at that.

Then the Wells Fargo team asked itself, “What can we potentially do better than any other company?” The brutal fact was that Wells Fargo would never be the best global bank in the world—and so the leadership team pulled the plug on the vast majority of the bank's international operations. When the team asked the question about the bank's economic engine, Wells Fargo's leaders confronted a second brutal fact: In a deregulated world, commercial banking would be a commodity. The essential economic driver would no longer be profit per loan, but profit per employee. The bank switched its operations to become a pioneering leader in electronic banking and to open utilitarian branches run by small crews of superb people. Profit per employee skyrocketed. Finally, when it came to passion, members of the Wells Fargo team all agreed: The mindless waste and self-awarded perks of traditional banking culture were revolting. They proudly saw themselves as stoic Spartans in an industry that had been dominated by the wasteful, elitist culture of banking. The Wells Fargo team eventually translated the three circles into a simple, crystalline Hedgehog Concept: Run a bank like a business, with a focus on the western United States, and consistently increase profit per employee. “Run it like a business” and “run it like you own it” became mantras; simplicity and focus made all the difference. With fanatical adherence to that simple idea, Wells Fargo made the leap from good results to superior results.

In the journey from good to great, defining your Hedgehog Concept is an essential element. But insight and understanding don't happen overnight—or after one off-site. On average, it took four years for the good-to-great companies to crystallize their Hedgehog Concepts. It was an inherently iterative process—consisting of piercing questions, vigorous debate, resolute action, and autopsies without blame—a cycle repeated over and over by the right people, infused with the brutal facts, and guided by the three circles. This is the chicken inside the egg.

Disciplined action: The “stop doing” list

Take a look at your desk. If you're like most hard-charging leaders, you've got a well-articulated to-do list. Now take another look: Where's your stop-doing list? We've all been told that leaders make things happen—and that's true: Pushing that flywheel takes a lot of concerted effort. But it's also true that good-to-great leaders distinguish themselves by their unyielding discipline to stop doing anything and everything that doesn't fit tightly within their Hedgehog Concept.

When Darwin Smith and his management team crystallized the Hedgehog Concept for Kimberly-Clark, they faced a dilemma. On one hand, they understood that the best path to greatness lay in the consumer business, where the company had demonstrated a best-in-the-world capability in its building of the Kleenex brand. On the other hand, the vast majority of Kimberly-Clark's revenue lay in traditional coated-paper mills, turning out paper for magazines and writing pads—which had been

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the core business of the company for 100 years. Even the company's namesake town—Kimberly, Wisconsin—was built around a Kimberly-Clark paper mill.

Yet the brutal truth remained: The consumer business was the one arena that best met the three-circle test. If Kimberly-Clark remained principally a paper-mill business, it would retain a secure position as a good company. But its only shot at becoming a great company was to become the best paper-based consumer company—if it could take on such companies as Procter & Gamble and Scott Paper Co. and beat them. That meant it would have to “stop doing” paper mills.

So, in what one director called “the gutsiest decision I've ever seen a CEO make,” Darwin Smith sold the mills. He even sold the mill in Kimberly, Wisconsin. Then he threw all the money into a war chest for an epic battle with Procter & Gamble and Scott Paper. Wall Street analysts derided the move, and the business press called it stupid. But Smith did not waver.

Twenty-five years later, Kimberly-Clark emerged from the fray as the number-one paper-based consumer-products company in the world, beating P&G in six of eight categories and owning its former archrival Scott Paper outright. For the shareholder, Kimberly-Clark under Darwin Smith beat the market by four times, easily outperforming such great companies as Coca-Cola, General Electric, Hewlett-Packard, and 3M.

In deciding what not to do, Smith gave the flywheel a gigantic push—but it was only one push. After selling the mills, Kimberly-Clark's full transformation required thousands of additional pushes, big and small, accumulated one after another. It took years to gain enough momentum for the press to herald Kimberly-Clark's shift from good to great. One magazine wrote, “When ... Kimberly-Clark decided to go head to head against P&G ... this magazine predicted disaster. What a dumb idea. As it turns out, it wasn't a dumb idea. It was a smart idea.” The amount of time between the two articles: 21 years.

Now it begins

Our study of what it takes to turn good into great required five years—and 10.5 person-years—and amounted to our own flywheel effort. Looking back on our research, what's most striking to me about our findings is the absence of a magic moment in any of the good-to-great companies—or in our own journey to understanding. The real path to greatness, it turns out, requires simplicity and diligence. It requires clarity, not instant illumination. It demands each of us to focus on what is vital—and to eliminate all of the extraneous distractions.

After five years of research, I'm absolutely convinced that if we just focus our attention on the right things—and stop doing the senseless things that consume so much time and energy—we can create a powerful Flywheel Effect without increasing the number of hours we work.

I'm also convinced that the good-to-great findings apply broadly—not just to CEOs but also to you and me in whatever work we're engaged in, including the work of our own lives. For many people, the first question that occurs is, “But how do I persuade my CEO to get it?” My answer: Don't worry about that. Focus instead on results—on subverting mediocrity by creating a Flywheel Effect within your own span of responsibility. So long as we can choose the people we want to put on our own minibus, each of us can create a pocket of greatness. Each of us can take our own area of work and

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influence and can concentrate on moving it from good to great. It doesn't really matter whether all the CEOs get it. It only matters that you and I do. Now, it's time to get to work.

Jim Collins wrote the essay "Built to Flip" in the March 2000 issue of Fast Company. His new book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... And Others Don't*, will be available in October.

Sidebar: Separating the good from the great

Can a good company become a great company? How? It took Jim Collins and his team of researchers five years to come up with the answers: 11 companies made the leap from good to great and then sustained those results for at least 15 years. How great was great? The good-to-great companies averaged cumulative stock returns 6.9 times the general market in the 15 years after their transition points. The actual screening-and-selection process was a rigorous one. The criteria were:

1. The company had to show a pattern of good performance, punctuated by a transition point, after which it shifted to great performance. "Great performance" was defined as a cumulative total stock return of at least three times the general market for the period from the transition point through 15 years.
2. The transition from good to great had to be company specific, not an industrywide event.
3. The company had to be an established and ongoing enterprise—not a startup. It had to have been in business for at least 25 years prior to its transition, and it had to have been publicly traded with stock-return data available for at least 10 years prior to its transition.
4. The transition point had to occur before 1985 to give the team enough data to assess the sustainability of the transition.
5. Whatever the year of transition, the company had to be a significant, ongoing, stand-alone company.
6. At the time of its selection, the company still had to show an upward trend.

The study began with a field of 1,435 companies and emerged with a list of 11 good-to-great companies: Abbott Laboratories, Circuit City, Fannie Mae, Gillette Co., Kimberly-Clark Corp., the Kroger Co., Nucor Corp., Philip Morris Cos. Inc., Pitney Bowes Inc., Walgreens, and Wells Fargo.

The next step in the study was to isolate what it took to make the change. At this point, each of the 11 good-to-great companies was paired with a comparison company—a company with similar attributes that could have made the transition, but didn't.

Then the research began. Collins and his team reviewed books, articles, case studies, and annual reports covering each company; examined financial analyses for each company, totaling 980 combined years of data; conducted 84 interviews with senior managers and board members of the companies; scrutinized the personal and professional records of 56 CEOs; analyzed compensation plans for the companies; and reviewed layoffs, corporate ownership, "media hype," and the role of technology for the companies. The findings are contained in *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... And Others Don't* (HarperBusiness, 2001).

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Sidebar: Great answers to good questions

Fast Company: The CEOs who took their companies from good to great were largely anonymous. Is that an accident?

Jim Collins: There is a direct relationship between the absence of celebrity and the presence of good-to-great results. Why? First, when you have a celebrity, the company turns into “the one genius with 1,000 helpers.” It creates a sense that the whole thing is really about the CEO. At a deeper level, we found that for leaders to make something great, their ambition has to be for the greatness of the work and the company, rather than for themselves. That doesn’t mean that they don’t have an ego. It means that at each decision point—at each of the critical junctures when Choice A would favor their ego and Choice B would favor the company and the work—time and again the good-to-great leaders pick Choice B. Celebrity CEOs, at those same decision points, are more likely to favor self and ego over company and work.

FC: Like the anonymous CEOs, most of the good-to-great companies are unheralded. What does that tell us?

JC: The truth is, few people are working on the most glamorous things in the world. Most of them are doing real work—which means that most of the time they’re doing a heck of a lot of drudgery with only a few moments of excitement. The real work of the economy gets done by people who make cars, who sell real estate, and who run grocery stores or banks. One of the great findings of this study is that you can be in a great company and be doing it in steel, in drug stores, or in grocery stores. No one has the right to whine about their company, their industry, or the kind of business that they're in—ever again.

FC: Let’s say that I’m not running a company. How do the good-to-great lessons apply to me?

JC: The basic message is this: Build your own flywheel. You can do it. You can start to build momentum in something for which you've got responsibility. You can build a great department. You can build a great church community. You can take every one of these ideas and apply them to your own work or your own life.

FC: What does your research suggest about the best way to respond to the current economic slowdown?

JC: If I were running a company today, I would have one priority above all others: to acquire as many of the best people as I could. I’d put off everything else to fill my bus. Because things are going to come back. My flywheel is going to start to turn. And the single biggest constraint on the success of my organization is the ability to get and to hang on to enough of the right people.

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### Appendix 3 – an extract from the core values of ST Thomas, Philadelphia

St Thomas's core values relate to Faith, Community, Identity, Discipleship, Transformation. Each of these is described in detail on the website at <http://www.stthomaschurch.org.uk/our-core-values>. Below is the introduction followed by the description of Faith.

#### Introduction - Our Core Values

Our core values are the result of a lot of reflection about what makes our church distinctive. Every church is made up of a mix of ingredients from its people, history, context and cultures. All this comes together to become the things we value. Why we do what we do.

What are the base motivations and inspirations for how we live and act as a church, as a community of faith, calling others towards God? What values are key to us? Therefore, what do we want to replicate as we seek to further God's kingdom, through words, works and wonders?

Our Core Values were put together over a process of 2 years by a sizeable group of leaders of St Thomas' Philadelphia, King's Centre and City:Base, both staff and voluntary, both working at the centre and ministering in the city in Missional Communities.

#### What is distinctive through all our Core Values?

At the heart of our values is an understanding that our journey with God and each other is all about Covenant and Kingdom.

**Covenant** is the theme in scripture that expresses God's desire to call us into deep and loving relationship with Him and to partner with Him in transforming our society as we ourselves are transformed.

**Kingdom** is the rule and reign of God in His people, and increasingly in this world. We partner with Him to further His Kingdom in words, works and wonders as we overflow His great "power that is at work within us" (Eph 3:20) into the world around.

Our church believes that every Christian can learn to do what Jesus did on earth, and should take responsibility for growing to do so. We aim at all times to model Jesus' approach to his followers which was low control, high accountability. The way we put our Core Values into practice should be by this process of low control (leaders don't tell people what to do, but empower everyone to seek God for their own actions and call) and high accountability (people choose to submit to each other and share the decisions, joys and challenges in honest relationship).

#### What do we do now we've established our Core Values?

We aim to replicate them in most things we do! Core Values are like DNA - the common thread and building-blocks that make up how together we 'seek first the kingdom'. Being aware of our values should shape our behaviour as a church—from the biggest to the smallest matters, confident that these values are biblically rooted. We should aim to copy these values and to measure what we already do against them.

- See more at: <http://www.stthomaschurch.org.uk/our-core-values#sthash.4hLFSfj9.dpuf>

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### Example of a core value - Faith

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

Faith is at the heart of a missionary disciple. Without faith we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). With faith, we see the world and both its challenges and opportunities in a very different light. We value a perspective of biblical faith and the dynamic inspiration of God as we face life's ups and downs, life's decisions and restrictions.

Faith comes from hearing God speak (Rom. 10:17), primarily through his revealed Word the Bible, which points to his living Word Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3:16). Faith is God's gift to us (Eph. 2:8) which builds by hearing God and acting on what He says. We should weigh together what we think He is saying (1 Cor. 2:16), then walk it out together. Discipleship 'huddles' within our church are one of the ways we train ourselves to do this.

Faith can be described as 'the currency of heaven' - it unlocks the Kingdom of God, it makes an entry point for God's supernatural power to break out amongst people.

The process of learning to operate by faith is described by Jesus in Mark 1:15 when He says "The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news."

'Repent' means 'change the way you think.' We are to allow God's principles and promises in the Bible to impact our lives so that we choose to believe them despite any past experience or scepticism we might have about their effectiveness. We surround ourselves with stories of faith and the things God has done already. We spend time with those who have more faith than we do.

'Believe' means 'step out and act on the new way that you are thinking.' It is not enough to just change our opinion; we also change what we do. Our church believes this is best done in community with others, so that we are accountable and supported as we learn to operate by faith in the many different areas of our lives; serving others, praying for the sick, trusting God with our money, being transformed at home and at work and sharing the good news of Jesus with those who do not yet know Him...to name just a few!

### The Lifeshape which informs Faith is the Circle.



The Circle helps us to apply the principles of our faith by recognising and responding to life's events (major or minor). Asking ourselves the questions: "What is God saying?" and "What am I going to do about it?"

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It helps us to be intentional. It's about building a habit of learning from life as a disciple of Christ. Then putting that learning into practice in the power of the Holy Spirit, through accountability and community with others.

### **WE VALUE**

- Following the learning circle through its full process
- That every Christian can hear from God (John 10:3,14,16)
- Boldness in risk taking, freedom to try and fail, grace in weakness
- Accountability about our journeys of faith
- "We live by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7) so that God's Kingdom possibilities and Word take precedence over present circumstances
- Sharing our faith through words, works and wonders
- Openness to reconsider our theology and practices based on the biblical example or considered experience of our community and others we respect

### Appendix 4 – Peter’s notes on unity

The key passage which drives me is Judges 6, which is the story of Gideon. The position of the Israelites at this time seems to parallel our experience in Cramlington; they put enormous effort each year into preparing the ground, sowing seed into it then nurturing the seed as it grew. But before they could reap a harvest, each year the Midianites came and either took the harvest or destroyed it. The result was that a people who should have been living in plenty were struggling to survive.

The reaction of the Israelites is interesting, too. They never considered tackling the main problem they faced (their enemy) but instead focussed on survival on the meagre rations they were able to keep – Gideon threshing in a wine press is an obvious example of this. They adopted a strategy of finding places to hide; some formed strongholds where they could get on with their lives safely; others hid in caves. They probably made the best of a bad job and made their caves as comfortable as possible; and as humans always adapt to circumstances, began to celebrate their own cave’s advantages.

The trouble with caves and strongholds is that they are, by definition, divisive; they encourage commitment to small groups rather than to the wider ‘body’; they breed suspicion and jealousy – ‘those people in the big cave seem better fed than we are’ ‘I wonder what they are plotting’ ‘they look down on us’.....

I think that this reaction is totally understandable and no blame should be apportioned to the Israelites for it; each individual and group probably looked at the situation and said – correctly - ‘what can we do against so powerful an enemy?’. Worn out from years of trying so hard and seeing so little for their efforts, they said ‘We are too tired for a new challenge, somebody else should do it’. With no real strategy in mind, every individual scheme that came to mind promised much but ended in disappointment and discouragement. But they were missing the point – together, with God’s blessing, they were more than equal to the task.

The way forward for the Israelites was simple; they needed to be enticed out of the caves and strongholds and brought together, led into a plan of God’s making which they could all understand and commit to. So unity was not about past fights and ‘who did what to whom’ – it was about everyone acknowledging their position, their relative fruitlessness; the wrong choices made which led them there; then looking to the same God and ‘owning’ the way forward.