

CHARTING A NEW COURSE

SUMMARY

Charting a New Course is too long a document to summarise effectively. The main mission points and suggestions for future action are set out below.

MISSION ISSUES

The final list of Mission Issues was placed in order after voting – letters are those assigned for purposes of the exercise – numbers in brackets are scores from the prioritising exercise.

1. Deepen the spiritual life of the church through the development of house groups/prayer groups etc.
2. Develop better publicity and distribution of leaflets, and improve the notice board and entrance doors and area
3. Develop the buildings to best support the mission objectives of the church
4. Develop more activity groups meeting on church premises as an opportunity to offer friendship and share the love of Jesus
5. Develop and train a welcome team to improve greeting at the door
6. Develop Pastoral care as an evangelistic opportunity – offering care and friendship to elderly and lonely people
7. Develop midweek activity (Alpha?) or alternative worship opportunity to try and attract “Christian” non attenders
8. Find ways of reaching out to and bridging the gap with the parents and toddlers group
9. Create a transport scheme to enable those who need it to attend church activities
10. Should the church target empty nesters? (44-59s)
11. Take time to discern the rightness or otherwise of developing ministry to young people
12. Investigate ways of supporting single parents in Dawlish
13. Take opportunity to develop contacts with residential and nursing homes

MAIN ACTION POINTS

General

Possibly focus on older population as initial target group

Make the most of existing opportunities and encourage further steps towards faith

Explore a monthly outdoor service in the summer

Conduct a TRIO or ACT programme to encourage more consistent and increased giving

Consider increased and proportionate giving away to mission

Vision

- Re-focus on the church mission statement with a series of sermons over several months
- Find a more succinct slogan to sum up the church's mission purpose

Prayer

- Encourage corporate prayer through small groups

Small Groups

- Prioritise forming small groups using preaching series on mission statement as basis for study, and also The Emmaus Course
- Make use of small groups as an evangelistic opportunity

Evangelism and strategy

- Formulate a long term strategy for evangelism
- Offer a parenting course to parents and toddlers and others
- Invite the Evangelism Enabling Team to run a course on personal evangelism, possibly co-operating with other URCs in the area
- Examine ways in which the culture gap can be bridged

Pastoral care

- Review the current pastoral care arrangements to develop the team
- Find ways in which pastoral care can become an evangelistic tool
- Appoint a pastoral care co-ordinator
- Recruit and train a welcoming team with pastoral skills uppermost in the job specification
- Appoint pastoral carers specifically responsible for newcomers

Buildings

- Pursue the sale of Hamilton Halls and the development of the rest of the building without delay
- Make use of the existing Wish List of building requirements
- Remodel the entrance doors and area
- Investigate the practicalities of providing disabled friendly access
- Give serious consideration to the lighting of the premises
- Replace the two notice boards with more modern boards and consider redesigning the exterior signage and area
- For a publicity working group to implement better publicity for the church and its events
- Create and maintain a website presence on the internet

Final Comments

The visit to and work with Dawlish URC was a rewarding time for the consultant. The people he met with seemed in good heart and despite the weaknesses they identified of being an ageing congregation and lacking in resources, he discovered a group of people with vision and determination to move forward. Whilst all churches will have a large number of people who do little more than attend on Sundays (and this is true of Dawlish URC) there is also a strong and enthusiastic core of people who have a great deal of motivation and possess many gifts which can be utilised to enlarge the Kingdom of God and to grow the church. The church should be encouraged by what they are already doing and be prepared to take further steps of faith. There are many hurdles to be jumped and there is an immense challenge in the redevelopment of the premises, but the opportunities afforded by the potential here should not be underestimated. Immediately there is the challenge of losing their minister, but instead of simply waiting around for the next one to appear, the church needs to move forward and establish direction, vision and a strategy for the future which any future minister can then take on board and “run with” in their service to the church in Dawlish.

This report attempts to offer many ways forward – some of them are basic and deal with the spiritual life of the church. Others are more practical and may require resources which are currently not present. But with God all things are possible – all He requires is a people willing to discover and to do His will, submitted to his Lordship and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

*“The angel replied... ‘**For nothing is impossible with God.**’*

³⁸ Mary responded, ‘I am the Lord’s servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true.’”

Luke 1:37b-38 – New Living Translation