

# Sturton Street Methodist Church Vision and Strategy Report



## Spring 2011

***VISION:** authentic faith and community. To be a church that offers a place of safety and acceptance where we can explore together what it means to be followers of Christ, to listen, share, question and challenge. A place where we can be found by God and learn to live in His life of hope, compassion and creativity. We would like to act as Christ's hands in the world, offering practical support and spiritual companionship to our community as we together seek to bring God's Kingdom of peace, grace and wholeness into being.*

**The story so far:** Sturton Street Methodist Church is situated in the Petersfield area of Cambridge, a residential area with a broadly middle class community built up of a cross-section of ages and occupations. The church dates from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was partly rebuilt in the 1950s after being bombed during the Second World War. In the last 10 years the congregation has been fairly small. In 2004 several new members moved to Sturton Street from other local churches. The congregation at this time was mainly elderly. Over the last 7 years the demographic has changed considerably. Our community now spans a wide age range from babies to recently retired, with most of the congregation being in the 20s-40s age bracket. We do not share with other churches in the circuit the challenges of an ageing congregation, but find that a predominantly younger congregation has its own constraints since work and family commitments limit the amount of time members are able to give to the church.

The church community at Sturton Street is characterised by its friendliness and close relationships between people. This supportive and loving, yet also open and welcoming atmosphere is something which we highly value, and see as being a major strength of the church. The church continues to be small in numbers, with most services being attended by around 8-18 people. We recognize that the size of the church is a source of fragility, leaving us vulnerable to the personal situations of our active members; however, this vulnerability also means the gifts of all those involved in the church are valued, and leaves each of us with a sense of making a difference. We have a membership of 8, but several more people are heavily involved in the worshipping life and day to day management of the church. With this core group of people at its heart, the church tends to attract a fluid community. We hope that our church has been a blessing to many people, including students from Wesley House and people visiting England from around the world.

An important feature of our church is an openness to a variety of styles of worship, and different services. We value our fortnightly discussion services, which we feel contribute to the development of our community, as well as the development of our faith. Last year Sturton Street also hosted a 'film club' which met monthly to watch and discuss films from a Christian perspective. This proved highly interesting and enjoyable. In the past the church has benefited from a number of other initiatives such as a weekly Bible Study in the local pub and Junior Church activities on Sunday. We have also hosted events such as a Community Art Day and a Local History Exhibition.

The building at Sturton Street consists of the church, a vestry, a kitchen, toilets and a large church hall with two side rooms. The church hall is let out during the week to various groups, including a dance school and baby music group. We see this as an extension of the work of the church, and take very seriously the responsibilities and possibilities entailed in our role as a landlord. The church has a very successful parent and toddler group which meets weekly. This is highly valued by families in the area and has developed an extremely friendly and welcoming community of its own.

**Strengths and weaknesses:** Sturton Street is a small church with lots of enthusiasm and energy but limited resources of people, time and money. Over the last seven years we have discussed a range of projects, schemes or plans for growing and developing, and have learned that we do not have the required resources to take on extensive or ambitious projects. We have therefore made it a priority in our recent discussions about the future to focus on realistic and achievable ideas which are authentic to the community as it is at present as well as welcoming to others. We also aim to keep an open and prayerful mind as we take our ideas forwards, as we have been regularly surprised over recent years by the positive things which have happened which we have not expected or planned for, where we have seen the hand of God in opportunities which have arisen and the people who have passed through our community.

**Where do we go from here? :** Having identified as a community what it is that we value about our church, our vision is to build on these things and seek to do them better. We have structured our vision according to the framework of 'Our Calling'.

### **Worship**

Worshipping together is important to us and we value opportunities to get involved in the worship, as we have been able to do through discussion services. We would now like to explore ways to take more ownership of worship at Sturton Street, with the aim of empowering people within the congregation and achieving more continuity of styles between services. We hope that this would help newcomers to feel comfortable and the congregation to feel at ease inviting friends to church. Several people in our congregation have expressed an interest in doing the Worship Leader course and we hope to work with preachers to have more input into planning services. We intend to have further discussions about how much of the worship it would be appropriate and feasible for us to co-ordinate and how regularly.

We have a spacious, well lit church and feel that it is a place of peace which lends itself to worship. We intend to enhance the potential of this space and increase flexibility by removing some large furniture such as the pulpit, organ, communion table and communion rail and to acquire a small, portable wooden communion table. We hope to create some visual resources, including a banner, which reflect the nature of the worshipping community and help to foster creative worship. In the long term, we may consider redecorating the church.

### **Learning and Caring**

In the past few years we have on a number of occasions incorporated sequences of themed services into our worship. We have found these very helpful and would like to organise our worship in this way on a regular basis. We feel that this could help to achieve continuity across a variety of styles of service led by different preachers. We feel that it is important to remain in touch with our Methodist traditions and feel that it would be of benefit to us to explore the roots of Methodism and what it means to be a Methodist Church in today's society as part of a planned series of services.

Along side this themed approach we intend to put in place a monthly structure of different styles of services. We are conscious of the need to provide age-appropriate material for the children among us, and are very keen to incorporate all-age worship into some of our services on a regular basis. We wish to continue with our discussion services and to explore the idea of having activity services. There is an interest in exploring different traditions of worship, including silence and meditation. We feel that it is important that the church worship space is furnished in such a way as to facilitate this (see below). As an extension of our worship and fellowship, we would like to develop a pattern of going on retreats twice a year.

### **Evangelism**

We value the trust, support and understanding which we have in our church community, which often feels like an extended family. We would like to share the love of God with more people in our community, and recognise that increasing the number of people in the church community would make it easier to manage the work involved in managing the building and the worshipping life of the church, and might enable us to engage with more different projects in the future. Our vision is for growth of the church community to happen organically, so that as people join they can build strong relationships and share in the love and support of the church. At the same time, we are always keen to welcome new individuals and groups and are open to initiatives which could increase our numbers.

In order to attract more members we need to raise the profile of the church in the local area. To do this we think that it will be vital to improve our notice board and to display up to date information about what our church is like and the services and events we hold. We also want to set up a church website to display the same information online. In addition to these key methods of advertising, we will consider advertising particular events by printing flyers and delivering them to our neighbours. As part of our quest to make our church more visible and attractive we aim to continue to enhance the appearance of the car park and garden by arranging for the railings to be preserved and having regular working party days to deal with the gardening.

We would like to hold a Church Fayre to which we plan to invite members of the local community, users of the building and any interested individuals. This might perhaps coincide with the reopening of a part of the building following renovations (depending on the timescale of these). We propose to supply refreshments and ask users who rent the building (eg the leaders of the dance school, baby music group etc) to have a stall advertising their activities and to provide an activity, game or entertainment. One of the aims of the Church Fayre would be to talk with people from the local area and users of the building and listen to their ideas about possible future initiatives for the church. We also hope that this would help to raise the profile of the church in the local area.

### **Service**

We value the positive relationships which we currently have with people who run the groups which meet on our premises, some of whom have offered help with upkeep of the buildings. Our vision is to provide a welcoming space which makes people feel valued and respected and to foster more links between the church and users of the building by inviting people to special services and events or working-party weekends. We are currently in the process of discussing various aspects of our role as landlords and our relationships with those who use the church building. It is our aim to explore how we can set rents at a fair level, taking into account the needs of tenants and how we could responsibly use lettings revenue to improve the building and support charitable purposes. Explore the possibility of changing the way that we tithe our income from lettings, so that instead of tithing revenue we instead tithe a percentage of lettings slots (i.e. a few hours per week) by offering them to groups at the lower charitable rate. There is a need to review the paperwork used for lettings and the way in which agreements with users are managed and renewed.

Over the next three years we would like to be able to refurbish the hall for community use, prepare the vestry for use as a quiet meeting space, equip the kitchen and toilets to modern standards and redecorate the church to be a place of sanctuary which reflects who we are as a community, and that is welcoming to people from different backgrounds and with different expectations of 'church'. Cambridge City Council has unexpectedly approached us with an offer of possible funding for this work. We are investigating council funding for the work in the hall, toilets and kitchen and are looking into what terms and conditions would be attached to this money.

We have a vision that the main church worship space could be opened during the week to offer people from the local community (or commuters passing the church on the way back from the station) the opportunity to come in and use the space for reflection. We intend to organise a rota of people (one man and one woman per session) to take responsibility for opening up the church and being present for a couple of hours once a week. Initially we would like to trial this for a short time, to see whether it is something which we can cope with staffing between ourselves. Drawing upon the expertise of one of our members, we hope to start up an embroidery group 'Saints and Pinners'. The principle behind this group would be that people would bring along projects which they were currently working on and benefit from having a quiet space to work together and chat. This group would be appropriate for people of all ages. One project which might emerge from this group could be a banner for display in the church.

**Our strategic plan -**

## Worship

*1. We aim to take more responsibility for the leadership of worship in order that services may reflect our identity as a worshipping community.*

<b>To implement this aim we will:</b>	<b>This will be led by:</b>	<b>Time scale:</b>	<b>Financial implications:</b>	<b>Intended outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiate with the circuit a plan for taking more part in the leadership of worship.</li> <li>• Put in place themed sequences of services.  <i>Possible themes might include: exploring our Methodist roots; looking at different forms of Communion service; perceptions of our church; studying a particular book of the Bible.</i></li> <li>• Within these themes follow a pattern of different styles of worship throughout the month (see Learning and Caring below).</li> <li>• Present our plans to the local preachers' meeting so that preachers can make an informed decision about which appointments they feel able to take.</li> </ul>	<p>Minister</p> <p>Worship leader working group</p> <p>ditto</p> <p>Kim</p>	<p>Before autumn plan</p> <p>Initial discussions before June</p> <p>ditto</p> <p>June</p>		<p>People will feel comfortable inviting friends to Sturton Street because there will be greater continuity between services and worship will reflect the identity of the community.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request that some members do the worship leaders course.</li> </ul>	<p>Minister/ circuit steward</p>	<p>When this can be organised by the circuit.</p>		<p>Members of the community will feel empowered to take a leadership role and our skills will be enhanced.</p>

*2. We aim to enhance the church worship space  
in order to provide a stimulating and flexible environment;  
a place of peace, joy, challenge and sanctuary.*

<b>To implement this aim we will:</b>	<b>This will be led by:</b>	<b>Time scale:</b>	<b>Financial implications:</b>	<b>Intended outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve use of space by removing/rearranging church furniture.</li> </ul> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><i>We plan to remove the pulpit and organ and to store some of the chairs in another part of the building.</i></p>	Clive	Working party day short term		The church will be a flexible space which can be used by ourselves and others for a variety of purposes ranging from large services of celebration e.g. weddings or christenings, to small meetings or quiet meditation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display visual stimuli in the church including a banner created by members of the congregation.</li> </ul>	Karen	Following first series of themed services.	Cost of needlework materials.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquire a portable communion table, to be made by young people working with a contact of Clive's.</li> </ul>	Clive	As soon as this can be arranged.	Cost of materials.	

## Learning and Caring

*We aim to put in place a monthly structure of different types of services in order to provide a 'balanced diet' of Christian teaching for adults and children.*

<b>To implement this aim we will:</b>	<b>This will be led by:</b>	<b>Time scale:</b>	<b>Financial implications:</b>	<b>Intended outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put in place a monthly structure including one all age family service, one preaching service, one discussion service and one 'alternative' style service.</li> <li>• As worship leaders, liaise with the preacher to share responsibility for leading and resourcing all-age worship.</li> <li>• Invite children from the toddler group to all-age services, particularly on special occasions e.g. Mothering Sunday, Harvest etc. and explore opportunities to take activities to the toddler group.</li> <li>• Present our plans to local preachers' meeting (as above).</li> </ul>	Worship leader working group	<p>Explore over the summer</p> <p>Take a proposal to June LP meeting</p> <p>Be prepared to begin new structure in September</p>	Cost of resources for all-age worship	<p>Our church will provide a 'balanced meal' of spiritual nourishment by covering a wider spectrum of Christian learning ranging from more in-depth theological study to the sharing of personal stories.</p> <p>Individuals will be aware of which services in the month will be particularly relevant to their needs, and will be able to invite friends to services which are particularly relevant.</p> <p>Our children will have the opportunity to benefit from Christian education appropriate to their age and experience.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise retreats twice yearly</li> </ul>	Kim			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• .Advertise services (see evangelism below)</li> </ul>				

## Evangelism

*We aim to raise the profile of our church in the local area in order to bring people into the church and attract new members.*

<b>To implement this aim we will:</b>	<b>This will be led by:</b>	<b>Time scale:</b>	<b>Financial implications:</b>	<b>Intended outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put up a notice board displaying current and relevant pictures and information about the church.</li> <li>• Continue to improve the appearance of the garden and car park area, particularly by planting out and maintaining flower beds.</li> <li>• Arrange for the railings at the front of the property to be preserved.</li> </ul>	<p>Andor</p> <p>Ngaio</p> <p>Karen</p>	<p>Summer</p> <p>Spring and ongoing</p> <p>Summer</p>	<p>Cost of notice board</p> <p>Cost of plants</p> <p>Cost of preservation (with some grant funding possibly available)</p>	<p>People who walk past the church will be able to clearly see that it is a church and that it is open and active with something distinctive to offer to the community.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite local people and users of the premises to a church fayre or open day.</li> <li>• Ask users of the premises to become involved and provide an attraction or activity, offering them a space to advertise their businesses.</li> <li>• Incorporate opportunities for members of the community to share ideas and suggestions.</li> </ul>	<p>Kim to coordinate</p> <p>Ngaio</p>	<p>Autumn</p>	<p>Cost of publicity materials and refreshments.</p>	<p>People from the local community and further afield will have an informal opportunity to come into the church, see the building and meet the congregation.</p> <p>We will have the opportunity to hear the ideas and suggestions of people who live in the neighbourhood and respond to any new ideas which are heard.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertise our services, special events and times when the church is open by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ displaying publicity on a notice board outside the church</li> <li>◦ setting up and maintaining a website</li> <li>◦ producing flyers for special services and distributing them in the immediate locality.</li> <li>◦ Making publicity for all-age services available to families coming into the building for children's activities throughout the week.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Andor</p> <p>Chris</p> <p>Kim</p>	<p>Autumn</p> <p>Autumn</p> <p>As appropriate</p>	<p>Cost of notice board</p> <p>Possible monthly cost of web space</p> <p>Cost of printing publicity materials</p>	<p>The local community, users of the premises and interested individuals will be able to find out easily what services and events we are having and when.</p> <p>When distributing flyers in the area we will have the opportunity to meet our neighbours and listen to their ideas.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities to create physical links between the church and the local community. <i>for example offering to hold services at Linnet House, opening the church at different times to provide a quiet space, offering exhibition space to local groups or artists, offering a prayer book for community use.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Karen and others</p>			<p>People who might not feel comfortable coming to a Sunday morning service will be offered an opportunity to join in activities at the church, thus becoming part of our authentic community.</p>

## Service

*1. We aim to steward effectively the community use of our building according to our Christian principles in order to make available to the community a welcoming space.*

<b>To implement this aim we will:</b>	<b>This will be led by:</b>	<b>Time scale:</b>	<b>Financial implications:</b>	<b>Intended outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the nature of groups using the church premises and charge the standard rate, set at a level which we consider fair and comparable to other premises, to all groups which are businesses run for profit.</li> <li>• Explore the possibility of changing the way that we tithe our income from lettings, so that instead of tithing revenue we instead tithe a percentage of lettings slots by offering them to groups at the lower charitable rate. <i>We might consider approaching local charitable groups pro-actively to ask if they would be interested in this.</i></li> <li>• Reset rental prices for the coming year, based on 2 rates: standard and charitable.</li> <li>• Review paperwork currently used for letting agreements and implement new documents. Review all letting agreements annually.</li> </ul>	<p>Ngaio, Chris Karen, Kirsty</p>	<p>As soon as possible allowing for necessary notice to be given.</p>	<p>Possibility of increased revenue from lettings.</p>	<p>The church will act as a fair and discerning landlord, taking account of who we are supporting in offering them the use of our building.</p> <p>We will build links with local charitable groups and be able to offer a service to them.</p> <p>Increased revenue from lettings will enable us to carry out improvements to the building.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will maintain and seek to improve the building and the facilities available, exploring possible council funding for renovation of the hall, kitchen and toilet areas.</li> </ul>	Clive and Karen		Possible funding from council, we will also need to contribute some funding to this.	The hall, kitchen and toilets will be better equipped for community use.
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*2. We aim to extend the activities of the church and the times that the building is open in order that people might come into the church to experience spiritual stimulation and refreshment.*

<b>To implement this aim we will:</b>	<b>This will be led by:</b>	<b>Time scale:</b>	<b>Financial implications:</b>	<b>Intended outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open the church for quiet prayer and meditation on one evening of the week. <i>We plan to organise a rota of people to open up the church and be around during these sessions.</i></li> <li>Advertise these sessions on the notice board , website etc.</li> </ul>	Andor	Explore for a limited period over summer to determine what is practical.		Local people will be invited to come into the church at different times, to talk or to be quiet and will have the opportunity to respond to being in the house of God.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a needlework group meeting in the vestry.</li> <li>Advertise in the local area and through existing needlework groups.</li> </ul>	Karen		Cost of needlework resources	