**Shaping for Mission meets Oswald’s Tree… Rebuilding after COVID**

What should the future church look like?

* Freer than it was, less formal
* ‘Servant hearted’
* Christians are gathering people so need a building to congregate – do we need to rethink our priorities around buildings?
* Members need their own confidence building so they can talk about their faith
* People of ‘Holy Habits’
* One that recognises Joan Winwood’s words that *‘we work alongside men and women who do not share our faith... how we are and how we act is our way of giving life to our faith’*
* One that goes out to people in ways that are meaningful and accessible to ‘them’ not just us

How do we build the church we want?

* We look to our ‘frontiers’…
* Existing contacts such baptisms, weddings and funerals and we make sure all are befriended, welcomed, included, and ‘kept in touch with’ in an open handed, generous way
* Increase our visibility and work in our community…
  + We need to get over the ‘one day a week Christian’ mentality. A visible initiative of ‘St Oswald’s in the Community’?
* Being ‘upfront’ with prayer, worship and teaching
* Bringing down barriers so that the act of coming into church becomes less alarming…
  + use the building for evangelisation – hosting non-church events, re-energising/re-imagining our tourism offering, creating a ‘story of Oswestry’ display board in church
  + work with other people/organisations
  + creating a safe space for people to ‘drop in and dwell’ midweek and on Sundays
  + midweek informal hospitality – coffee machine in church/parish centre?
  + Make churchyard a nicer place to be – benches, re-wilding project

*Some Oswald’s tree feedback…*

* Declutter
* Improved signage throughout the church, parish centre and churchyard
* Improve the lighting throughout and include feature lighting
* Introduce a dais at the chancel step with a nave altar
* Turn the South Aisle into a church shop
* St. George’s Chapel as chapel of remembrance with votive stand
* St. George’s chapel as exhibition/tourist space
* Create a church visitor’s route around the church with information boards
* Refurbish outside notice boards and include more comprehensive/relevant info
* Move font from south porch door to improve access
* Redecorate, especially the Parish Centre
* Move children’s area and replace with tourist info & hospitality area
* Move Church Office into the Parish Centre
* Repurpose the Parish Centre to make it more attractive to outside groups

Problems to be overcome:

* We have the ideas and the vision, where do we find the resources?
* Challenging those things we take for granted…
  + We think people know we are open and/or they can just ‘pop in’ and sit.
  + We think people see us as a ‘safe space’ where they can turn up and be themselves. But… they think things will be expected of them, that they cannot just come in, sit for a while and go. They wonder if their children will be criticised? How do we overcome this sense of them feeling uncomfortable?
  + Are we sufficiently accessible… are the light levels adequate for reading, can people hear/see properly?
  + Communication… our social media needs an urgent overhaul and rethink.
  + How do we communicate that whatever anyone does for the kingdom, however small, it makes a difference?

How might we work with other churches across the deanery?

* As a church we are ‘knowledge and experience’ heavy but ‘energy’ light…
  + We have people…
    - who enjoy church governance
    - who are spiritually mature and wish to offer mentoring
    - who have significant musical skills
    - who have administration skills
    - who can teach and train others
  + **but…** who are getting older and many have less energy
* We have a large building with good facilities and community links
* The town is an obvious focus for resourcing the deanery resource… a hub?
  + Could St Oswald’s act as a hub, providing signposting and Admin/IT support? Bring together people with different theologies/skills/interests to create a ‘deanery school’ of mission/prayer/discipleship etc
  + How can that be enabled to support the deanery churches without undermining them?

But there are issues…

* How do we create a vision across all the churches which is both meaningful and achievable?
* Need for a brave and honest debate about the significant differences in theology and church across the deanery and how we can work with/around them
* How could we resource an admin hub?
* How do we create the right balance between resourcing ourselves and others?
  + Places of Welcome to be back up and running as soon as it is safe.
  + New initiatives e.g. ‘Sunday at 4’
  + Re-energising Sunday morning worship
  + Green issues, really important that we are seen to be cherishing God’s creation.
  + 5th Sundays as an opportunity for something different
* Where do we find the resources and the energy?
* What will the Diocese allow us to do... how brave and radical will they be?