

THE SOCIAL CHANGES RESULTING IN AN INCREASING 'DISCONNECT' BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY/CULTURE, THE CHURCH'S PERCEIVED IRRELEVANCE, AND DIFFICULTY COMMUNICATING OUR FAITH [

This broad topic was seen to be the biggest issue facing us, and the church in general, when discussed at Church Council

Some of the 'thought starters' are in the following questions. A few comments from the Council follow each question:

1. In what areas has the community / culture 'grown apart' from the culture, interests and forms of the Church?

What does this look like, given the recognised 'disconnect' between the Church and wider community/culture?

Church was the centre of community; or, in a less complicated society was it one of the institutions that held society together? (Family. Church. Police, Army. Government)

Society is no longer a simple society with generally held beliefs and values. Technology, instant communication, global transport, different patterns of employment (or unemployment) change the very way we live. It is a 7 day 24 hour world.

The views and values of the different generations separate us. It is a multi-faith society– or some believe they have no faith. The church has different or no relevance in 21st Century

Priorities are governed by availability of time, work, money, family needs and personal aspirations.

A person's community is their contact list – email, facebook, fellow workers.

The church is seen to be out of step with society - science; church preaching and practice; child abuse Royal Commission'

We live in the "I" world, not the "We" world.

An associated and following question might be:

2. Is it feasible to think of this as an opportunity that we can plan to capitalise on - or is it more a case of do we have a 'value' that we need to adopt for all our planning?

What do you think? How do you see it?

3. How might we as a church 'connect' with the wider community – through action and/or communication and/or relationships?

Be in touch with the community. Be tuned to the community and know the needs, hopes, fears, passions etc all around.

Be a friend. Have a friend Look for the 'God moments' that arise to do or say (and often think!)

Be an example – love, serve, listen and share.

All of this assumes:

- a) We love our God and believe it is his way;
- b) We have faith that says we are part of God's creation and are walking with him in the daily making of his kingdom being on earth for all.
- c) We will live our faith and not be ashamed of it.

All of the above come from our views within the church. We are possibly/probably right. But have we asked those 'outside' of the church what they think? How do they see it?

4. Are we thinking of this as something we can plan to 'do' together - or something we expect a minister or 'other people' to do for us?

For our thinking and discussion. That will shape our 'what' and 'how'.

5. How do we expect 'connection' to relate to our ministry, mission and growth? Are we thinking 'new people coming to (old) church - or are we thinking 'new ways of being church that will share the love/life of Christ with people wherever they are?'

More thinking and thoughts needed.

6. What leadership, equipping or other resourcing is required to capitalise on this opportunity, whatever it is?

This will shape our praying, planning, acting and paying.

REMEMBER – WE ARE NOW LIVING IN THE 21ST CENTURY