Dear friends,

Thank you to everyone who came along to the extra meeting last month. The Staff and Stewards met last night and I agreed to write a short overview paper of the next steps we are proposing so that everyone knows what is happening and how they can get involved.

1. Please read this email carefully and slowly
2. Is there an area which excites you and which you would like to be part of? If so, do volunteer to a Steward or to Soba.
3. Do you have some passing thoughts or moments of genius to feed into any of these conversations and planning groups?
4. Why not ring a friend or sit on a bench with a friend (because we can now!) and talk things through or discuss it at House Group or with your family? And then let us know what you think because we are all convinced that the best ideas are out there, with you.
5. Pray, and keep on praying, that we use these months as a time to listen to God and to get better at serving each other and the community we are called and sent to serve.

The vision and overview

2021 is going to be a time of change, adjustment and reflection for every part of society and every Church. On top of that, Woosehill has seen a change in part of the ordained leadership of the Church with Patrick leaving and Soba arriving in September. Some people have moved away over the last 18 months and others have changed their Church. Some things we used to do might not be coming back, and there are other things we need to start doing in response to the need of the community and ourselves. All of which makes this season a key time to be intentional and deliberate about the next steps we are called together to take. The Staff and Stewards (and Soba and I) are committed to using the time from March to the end of August, as we come out of the current lockdown and, hopefully, are able to do more and more things, to position ourselves ready for the Autumn and for the new opportunities which are all around us. It is about rediscovering our purpose and our joy. It is about reminding ourselves what is special about worshipping at Woosehill and being part of an LEP. It is about being confident in the faithful God who keeps his promises always.

The process

We want to form three Working Groups around key aspects of Church life (which were identified at the extra meeting in February) which will meet and do things from now until the end of August. They are working groups and not committees and they will deliberately be quite small and quite specific in their focus. We are not trying to cover everything in this process, but to tee ourselves up for the future by managing the transition from where we are now back to a more relaxed and more familiar world.

The groups and their starting points

Group 1: Regathering the congregation

Group 2: Contacting those on the edge of the church

Group 3: Reimagining our worship

Group 1: Regathering the congregation

The aim of the group is to ensure that everyone who is part of Woosehill knows what is happening as we return to worship together and feels part of that journey.

It will provide opportunities (within the Government guidance) for people to see each other again and get to know each other once more.

A Church is a family and we will need to ensure that we are deliberate in coming back together again, in hearing each other’s stories and experiences and in turning our faces to the future God is calling us to walk into.

Some ideas from the extra meeting in Feb and the Staff and Stewards: phone call to everyone on the ER, organised meetings in small groups, tours of the church for those who are unsure about coming back.

Key question: how do we regather as a family, and hear each other and rally once more around who we are?

Group 2: Contacting those on the edge of the Church

The aim of the group is to rebuild links with those who we had regular contact with, reintroduce them to Woosehill Church and seek out new opportunities and fresh needs which we might be able to respond to.

Some ideas from the extra meeting in Feb and the Staff and Stewards: restart some PMC groups or table tennis: spend time with Energy Kidz and uniformed group leaders, Hawthorns and Tadpoles: run a special service to lament and hope: use the car park as a safe space for people to meet in

Key question: how do we start fresh, or restart old, conversations which show that we are a useful and effective partner in the community, a place of welcome and safety in the name of Jesus?

Group 3: Reimagining our worship

Getting the worship balance right in any Church is not easy, and it’s even harder in an LEP when more than one tradition is involved. And on top of the question of tradition is the question of how individuals lead worship. Different opinions have been offered as to what worship at Woosehill should be like and how it has changed recently. What change there has been has not necessarily been planned or deliberate and it is a good moment, as live worship restarts, to think through what we would like worship to be like and also who we have who is able and willing to play a part in leading. We need to agree an overall plan and then ensure that it is followed.

Music is part of this as well- we need to focus on a sustainable and balanced plan to ensure that the quality of music at Woosehill remains high and is live as often as possible. Worship is where we see ourselves most clearly and where we are most fully together. It needs to be an expression of Woosehill in all of its rich vibrancy and life. Above all, it needs to be an expression of how we see and understand and learn from God.

Some ideas from the extra meeting in Feb and the Staff and Stewards: an online questionnaire to the whole congregation asking about worship as a starting point: special vigil of lament: recommit to Café Church when we can be together again

Key questions: Is the issue what we do or whether we do it well? Or, are we doing the right things but not in a way that connects? Should we have one single core Woosehill expression of worship or should each week feel (predictably) different as an expression of the tradition the minister comes from?

And how do we get as much live music as possible in Church?

Concluding thoughts

We also need to keep an eye on publicity and visibility and making sure people know what is happening and why we are doing things.

The process here is as important as the outcome, I think. We will come up with lots of good ideas which we will need to record and put aside. If each of the three groups can prayerfully and thoughtfully inspire and oversee two or three things in the next 6 months which directly address their objective then this will all have worked very well.

And please do keep thinking and talking about all of this, and praying about all of this, that we will have the energy and the openness and the passion to be active in following where God is calling us to be.