

Vicar's Vision for APCM – 26th April 2015 by Phil Bradley

The Vision for the four churches of the Upper Thames Group is to **create opportunities for everyone to experience God's love.**

The Leadership Team have been considering what this means in the context of Cricklade and Latton, and what we believe God may be calling us to following our Annual Meeting. The Team spent time listening to God and felt that He was suggesting 6 priorities which on reflection seem to divide into 2 categories. These are as follows:

1. Discipleship

- a. The churches need to grow in faith and joy.
- b. We need to enable opportunities for people to meet together to discuss faith or express faith through activity.
- c. We need to be a church community with a feeling of oneness.

2. Intentional Evangelism

- a. We need to enable opportunities to befriend others and build trust.
- b. We need to provide 'entry points' to Christianity and our church family.
- c. We need to grow our presence in the community.

Within these priorities, we are commencing a "Year of Discipleship" starting today (26th April) with the launching of a Sermon Series on Spiritual Disciplines across the Upper Thames Group. We are also looking to grow Small Groups, run courses, explore the Bible more intentionally and instigate one-one mentoring.

With regards to evangelism we are planning to align ourselves with the Bristol Diocesan strategy for 2016-2018, which is looking to grow our churches by adopting best practice from other growing churches, and putting more energy into the missing generations of 10-40 year olds. (note: our four churches are part of a wider group of churches known as the Bristol Diocese). This strategy calls for churches to be more radical in their approach to speaking with these younger generations whilst reviewing how we are church across all ages.

This fits in with other areas that we believe God is calling us to which are as follows:

- to employ a youth and family worker
- to start a youth café after school one evening per week
- to grow young leaders in the Church
- to reintroduce a buddy system for weddings and baptisms
- to offer courses and events that enable friendships to be developed with those outside of the Church.

I am sure this is still scratching the surface, but as we understand more of the Diocesan Strategy then I am convinced we will hear God calling us in many other ways. I believe this is an exciting dawn for the future of our churches in the Upper Thames Group, and for the church in England as a whole.