



Building Foundations for Life

There's been a fair amount of building work in our community and it keeps on going. While design and vision might be exciting, frankly the ground works are fairly messy and not very exciting; however without good foundations, fulfilling the vision is virtually impossible.

When I began to work with a small team on a strategy for fulfilling the vision, we looked back over the last five years. Ironically, we found the most useful lessons in the questions about what didn't happen and why. As we worked, it became clear that there are a number of foundations that must be laid at the beginning of our journey toward 2014, without which we simply won't have the wherewithal and the basis to build on.

We realised that, again and again, things had stalled because we hadn't developed the people to lead, nor had we taken opportunities to involve and support the wide range of people in our church. We concluded that we cannot continue in the way we have been, it doesn't work, whether you are old school or new school!

So one of our principal proposals to PCC is that we must explore HOW God is calling us to live and work as a Christian community; to look at the role of parish priest and other ministers; of the church members and the congregation; and following the vision itself, how we work more effectively with our brother and sister churches and the wider community.

We have recommended that this is one of the first tasks that the PCC undertake this winter, and that we explore it as a church through the Easter season in April; giving opportunity for discussion and review at the Annual Parish Church Meeting in April.

Our communications have been improving over the years, most significant being the launch of our web site - www.smwa.co.uk. But we still have quite a lot to do to make sure everyone knows what is going on, and that it is accurate and attractive information. We believe that this will help us express our welcome more widely to the community and to those who are new to the church. The welcome team have already been working for a while on this, and we will be seeking to put their recommendations into practice as soon as possible, including clearer signposts about how to get into the church building!!

In addition to this, we recognise that the church building needs a bit of a tidy up, and we need to have a space for worship that is attractive, practical and effective for the way we worship. This is not the redecoration and upgrade of the church building that we are expecting at some point in the next seven years, this is a more practical and small scale getting ready for the journey ahead; which will take place early in the new year. Details of this will be published once they have been agreed by PCC.

I won't continue, as the description of policy formation and PCC working methods is likely to create an effective cure for insomnia!! A full copy of the strategy for the next seven years will be published once the adjustments have been made. In the meantime, we will publish each month what has been achieved and what is coming up.

Building foundations is boring, and frequently the work of a few. To keep oneself from giving up, we have to keep clear in our heads the vision, and we need to keep this vision in our prayers. The words on the sculptures outside the church quote Jesus saying, "I came so they have life and have it in abundance". As the vision has developed for St Michael's, those words have grown in their significance, expressing our hope for ourselves and our hope for the people of West Andover.

Speaking of Hope, while foundations are being laid for the vision at St Michael's, we are looking to make real our Hope for Andover, but I'll leave Peter Watson to tell you all about that in the article that follows!!

Best Wishes
Chris