

Rev Dr Richard Hills bequest

For those of you who heard me speak on Sunday 24th October, apologies, this is a bit of a repeat but I hope you agree with me that this is an idea that needs repeating in order to stir up a passion within everyone of us.



On Tuesday night our PCC met with two people from the diocese to discuss the use of the bequest from Rev Dr Richard Hills. We looked at the results from our questionnaire and pinpointed certain areas that we feel would be valuable.

I feel that it is important to consider Richard in all of this. He never left any restrictions on how this money is to be used, for which we are very grateful, but Richard was a priest and I feel that his money should be used to continue his ministry. There are many things that we would like to do and could easily spend this money several times over, so we need to look at the best way to make the most of his gift.

With this in mind, I have been asking myself who we have not seen in our congregation over the last couple of months. I have watched many people return to church, following the lockdown, but one group of people who have really struggled to return have been families with young children and young people. It isn't easy to keep children engaged in worship when maintaining social distances. Young people have borne the brunt of accusations in the media for spreading the virus. So it is only natural for them to want to stay away from places where they may end up passing on a virus that they may have caught simply by attending school, but now we need to reach out to them; to affirm our love and God's love for them. So many times we have heard about young people struggling with mental health problems over the last two years. There is such great need for these people to hear that they are loved and valued.

As the letter to Timothy explains, there will be false teachers out there and we are called to ensure that our young people know where to go to find God's teachings; God's desires for them, and how to discern teachings which might lead them from the course that Jesus would want from them – not to tell them what to do or how to behave, but to give them the tools to make informed decisions throughout life to become what God has created them to be.

This is a trying time for people of faith. It is hard to enter a church building and be told where to sit and not to do this or that because you may end up harming someone. Having such strict rules makes the place feel as if it belongs to someone else and is not your own but this is the church's building; and the church is the people who make up the body of Christ.

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Cait Writes (continued)

And if you haven't heard me say this before - the children in this church community are NOT the future of this church, they ARE the church. They are Christ's hands, feet, eyes and ears.

Supporting children also means supporting parents. A new parent who hasn't slept for 6 weeks might not find it easy to ask for help. How do we tell him or her that Jesus is there for them when it is so much easier for them to engage with other outlets? I suggested to the PCC that we appoint a Families' and Children's Missioner. Here are a few things that such a person might be asked to do:

1. Work closely in partnership with the Vicar and with other paid and voluntary workers as part of a whole town team leading in mission.
2. Be a 'Change Maker', working to transform the culture of the church, enabling a new focus on mission, increased lay involvement and a willingness to step forward in courageous new ways
3. Encourage and lead the development of fresh expressions of church relevant to the local setting,
4. Engage widely and confidently with the community, enabling others to join in mission and service
5. Participate in worship
6. Helping both enquirers and new believers on the 'Journey to Faith'
7. Initiate and expand links and networks with parts of the parish which are currently not in regular contact with the church. This may include schools, charities, agencies and local services
8. Seek partnerships with other churches and voluntary groups to work for the good of the surrounding community
9. Work creatively to establish sustainable mission activity

But what does all this mean in reality? In my previous role, we had a CFM and here are a few of the things she implemented or worked alongside:

- Who Let the Dads Out – dads and tots group.
- Young mother's prayer group.
- Developed and supervised creative prayer stations within schools.
- Ran and developed a toddler group.
- Enabled and trained volunteers from within and without the congregation to set up and run other groups.
- Aided at a fresh expression of church and place of welcome.
- Created *Harry Potter* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* events for children from the surrounding community.
- Supported Sunday clubs for different age groups of children.
- Worked with the clergy to deliver school assemblies and special services.
- Supported baptism ministry, confirmation groups and young people's discipleship courses.

... and many, many more activities.

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Cait Writes (continued)

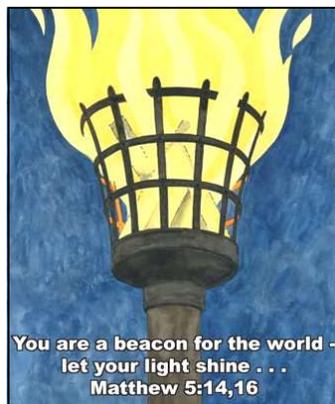
This is not to say that any of the volunteers from within the church sat back but she was able to connect with the community on a ground roots level and coordinate the existing groups to work where there was specific need, making the work of the church more efficient.

I would like to hear what you think about this, as a starting project to fund with Richard's bequest. It will not be the only thing we will be funding. So, in order to make the money go further, it would be sensible for us to apply to other charities for match funding etc. That in itself will require some work from the congregation to complete applications and to put together a job description and advertisement.

I would really value your thoughts about this, your ideas on how to fund raise, offers of support for the logistical task of employing someone and most importantly - **prayers**, prayers, prayers.

St Paul's letter warns us of false teachings tempting people away from being the collective body of Christ, Jesus tells us that, despite knowing him we still turn away. Let us make a gift from a much loved priest and fellow disciple a way of turning the tables on such threats. This begins with Richard and the thoughts of the PCC but it can only become a reality if each of us gets excited by it; each of us considers how we get involved, each of us discusses, dare I say argue, with one another our thoughts, concerns and hopes, and each of us confirms it with God in prayer. Here is a new opportunity to be Christ in our community.

Cait



The PCC also noted serious concerns about the expensive and environmentally-unfriendly heating system, and the state of the tower and bells.

Match-funding will certainly be needed to deal with these. The process is bound to take much longer than the appointment of a Children's and Families' Missioner, which hopefully is something we can implement fairly quickly.

Our Parish Safeguarding Coordinator is:

Claire Bibby 01457 763758

If you are worried about a particular person or situation in connection with any church activity, you can use a safe email address to report it; this email is checked daily, and can be accessed only by Claire.

Contact: **safemottram@gmail.com**

