



VISION 2026

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING
COMMUNITIES

VISION 2026 STUDY COURSE

Vision 2026 – Five Week Diocesan Course
12th January – 9th February 2016
All Saints, Anchorsholme

Held: Tuesdays:- 13:30 – 14:40
18:30 – 19:30

Attendance Figures:

12th January	
Afternoon	9
Evening	14
Total	23
19th January	
Afternoon	12
Evening	16
Total	28
26th January	
Afternoon	16
Evening	8
Total	24
2nd February	
Afternoon	13
Evening	14
Total	27
9th February	
Afternoon	10
Evening	11
Total	22

Introduction

The Diocese of Blackburn has composed a 5 week study course to compliment the Vision 2026 programme *Healthy Churches Transforming Communities*.

Over the weeks starting the 12th January 2016 an average of 25 members of our congregation met, an afternoon and an evening session (both with the same content), this twice run course was to ensure as many persons as possible could attend – ie those who had school children could attend the afternoon session but not the evening or indeed those with work commitments during the day.

The meetings were, on the whole, very positive, the study course was not designed nor did it set out to be a church basher nor a 'where has the Vicar gone wrong' but more a case of 'what is my role in the church and how can we work together to impact our local community in a way in which we are being obedient to God'. I believe we achieved this objective.

We looked closely at our own role in the church and the church's position in the community. By no means did we believe that All Saints had all the answers but overall the views expressed where one of All Saints being a fairly healthy church with strong leadership and an underlying desire to serve the community. All Saints has often been described as a "Church Without Walls" and has positively striven to make this a reality.

The many and varied suggestions of reaching into the local community were both imaginative and in many cases practical in their implementation, the ideas expressed here are ALL by the participating church members and the author of this report can take no credit for them.

Sifting through the report the reader will identify easily with what was discussed and no doubt recognise many suggestions that have been tried before or discussed or even carried out in the past. The ideas may not all be new but having said that just because we may have tried them in the past does not mean they will not work in the future.

It is appreciated that not all suggestions are practical or timely in application nor are they an attempt to 'tell the Vicar what to do' or 'how

to run his Church' but there is, I believe, value in our Vicar seeing what his congregation is thinking.

In the main I have recorded what was discussed at the five sessions and come to some very easy conclusions and suggestions for some things we could do to 'open' the church up more than it already is to the local community.

There was a feeling that we could easily be an 'island church' and there is an ongoing need to make the local community aware of our existence and what we had to offer them (which is a great deal) There are many existing great outreaches at All Saints and indeed many 'unseen' people working extremely hard 'behind the scenes' quietly getting on with working for the community surrounding All Saints.

I have listed some of the suggestions which I believe we can implement without a drain on our resources (with some noticeable exceptions).

Grant Davies
Vision Champion

Week 1: Healthy Churches

This session looked at what we saw as a Healthy Church and where All saints fitted into that definition. It was felt by both groups that we were indeed fairly healthy but still had scope for improvement.

Specific areas we were asked to look at were:

1. Worship – on a scale of A being healthy and F unhealthy the groups scored All Saints –

A	B	C	D	E	F
2	11	10	0	0	0

Comments: In general terms the Praise and Worship Team were highly praised and seen to be 'healthy'. The only comment on improvements was that older people sit near the back and can't always see the words on the screen clearly.

2. Vision – again on a scale of A being healthy and F unhealthy the groups scored All Saints –

A	B	C	D	E	F
2	13	8	0	0	0

Comments: People were not aware of what the Church Vision was or what the MAP included and felt that copies should be available on the Church Website.

3. Leadership & Collaborative Ministry - again on a scale of A being healthy and F unhealthy the groups scored All Saints –

A	B	C	D	E	F
4	15	4	0	0	0

Comments: It was agreed that Rev. Stef is a great encourager of people and their ministry within the Church. The only question that was raised was 'What is active discipleship' and what does it look like at All Saints?

4. Active Discipleship - again on a scale of A being healthy and F unhealthy the groups scored All Saints -

A	B	C	D	E	F
3	10	10	0	0	0

Comments: There was concern that we do not seem to hold onto people, the throughput was high - how do we 'keep' people?

5. Strong Sense of Community - again on a scale of A being healthy and F unhealthy the groups scored All Saints -

A	B	C	D	E	F
1	12	2	8	0	0

Comments: 'Are we an exclusive club? Or is that how we are seen?' How do people break into the All Saints groups? Do our structures encourage people to feel included? We don't seem to be scratching the surface of reaching the community...

6. Outward Looking Focus - again on a scale of A being healthy and F unhealthy the groups scored All Saints -

A	B	C	D	E	F
1	7	9	6	0	0

Comments: How effective are we in making ourselves as a Church and what we stand for known to the local community?

Garden Discussion: Using a picture of a garden as 'the Church' the groups discussed what they saw of themselves and the church as a whole:

- Healthy soil - the teaching at All Saints is very good
- A Fruit Tree - well established and bearing fruit
- Pruning is required to keep it healthy
- Christ is the fruit/flower support
- Are we 'pot bound?'

Week 2: Transforming Communities

Discussion 1: What are the things you like and value about your local community?

- Friendly neighbourhood, good amenities
- Good local councillor and MP
- A seaside community
- Quiet area
- Some people do try and promote the local community
- Compact Parish
- No hills and mild weather
- Low crime rate
- Good transport system
- Visitors at Christmas

Discussion 2: What are the challenges and difficulties that your local community faces?

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Aging population and related health issues
- Engaging with young people
- We are comfortable with the status quo
- Young families
- Chaotic lives
- Loneliness (older people)
- Ignorance of All Saints activities
- Apathy about the church and 'lost interest' in God
- Young people/gangs in park areas
- Limited transport
- Scattered families
- Too much traffic
- Working parents – time pressures
- No physical centre of the Parish for people to congregate at
- No sense of community
- Houses – people are isolated in them / prisoners in their own homes

Discussion 3: What ways are there in which All Saints can make a difference and help bring transformation to the area and people's lives. Consider any groups or organisations that we could work in partnership with?

- Make the Church 'Look like a Church' – not a Working Men's Club
- A Saturday Market
- Soup and charity auction
- Christians Against Poverty (CAP)
- A 'Comeback to Church' special event
- Quiz Team at local pub
- Advertise what we do already – explain what each group actually does
- Soup evenings eg: 4 charity reps state their case after the soup and the guests vote which one to donate to
- Table Tennis group – only non-church members attend, encourage church members
- Lunch club
- Drop in coffee mornings
- Social services
- AGE Concern to host an advice session once per month
- Teach basic IT skills at the local library
- East Pines Park events
- Environmental projects
- Provide lifts and child minding services
- Something for the men
- Christmas Day lunch for the lonely
- Prayer Vigil
- Queens 90th Birthday Party
- Follow-up after events
- Hold 5 Special Events per year
- Take on the Library (have a presence there)
- Join with Anchorsholme Methodist's
- Churches Working Together
- Ask shops to advertise Church Events
- Closer work with Councillors
- Run a Book Club
- Welcomers and Spotters on Sunday Morning
- Bereavement counselling

Week 3: Making Disciples of Jesus Christ

Discussion 1: 24 in attendance

Activity	We Do
Regular worship with others	22
Personal Bible Study	16
Group Bible Study	22
Personal Prayer	22
Prayer at start/end of day – giving the day to Him & ending the day with Him	11
Setting aside a special time of the day to pray	3
Prayer with others	19
Special times (retreats etc)	8
Going on a pilgrimage	4
Talking with a Christian friend	24
Mentor others spiritually	3
Reading Christian books	20
Listening to Christian music	14
Serving others	18
Involved in Leadership	5
Listening to God	12
Meeting in small groups	24
Have somewhere where we feel close to God	4
Keep a Prayer Journal	7

Comments:

- What happened to prayer triplets? If they are still ongoing could we advertise them again / if they have stopped can we restart them?

Discussion 2: Transport Exercise:

- **Which vehicle best represents where you are on your faith journey?**
- **Were there key people who helped you?**
- **Did it take a long time or did everything move quickly?**

Using the 'Road map and associated vehicles' most people saw themselves as several vehicles and indeed could relate to being most or all at some point in their life. We are 'mongrel' cars, good to see a reflective layby

"A lifelong process with occasional sharp movements".

Discussion 3: What can I offer the Church?

- Myself – like the Curates Egg (good in parts / bad in parts)
- To fit in where I can be most useful (a piece of the Church jigsaw)
- To encourage as much as possible
- Give more time to join in with things already happening
- Pray more for others
- Do better the things I already do
- Try to encourage family and friends
- To come to Church Events
- Make new visitors feel welcome
- Visit lonely people
- Already heavily committed to the Church – cannot offer any more
- Tithe 10% of my income
- Be available in the field of 'helps'
- Prayer before the 10:30am service
- Listen to people
- Openness to respond to the needs that matter
- Following where Christ leads
- My passion to see people disciple and go deeper with God
- Friendship
- To join a prayer triplet
- Invite people for a meal
- Give lifts
- Share a holiday
- Gardening
- Accompany me on a walk
- Take an elderly person out for a coffee

Week 4: Being Witnesses to Jesus Christ

Discussion 1: Which people helped you to discover the “Good News about Jesus”?

Family Member
Partner
Friend
Billy Graham
Sunday School

The predominant factor in nearly everyone’s journey of faith is a close friend or family member, even those who went to a Billy Graham event went with friends.

Discussion 2: What stepping stones might help encourage people to move from exploring faith to becoming a committed disciple of Jesus, serves God and tells others the Good News?

- ALPHA
- Nexus
- Olive Branch
- Onesies
- Footsteps
- Tuesday Break
- Youth Work
- Queens 90th Birthday Party
- Dorcas
- Social – living alongside people
- Prayer and testimony
- Small nurture group after ALPHA in someone’s home

Often the first steps that people make in their faith journey are coming into contact with Christians at a social event. Does All saints have social activities that would match the interests of the local community?

- Quiz nights
 - Barn dances
- “Plenty going on although people perceive the church as miserable, thick black Bibles, end of the world is nigh – they need to see who we really are”.

Are there other 'Stepping Stones' that might help people move forward as followers of Jesus?

- Barn dances
- Chocolate bingo
- No Confirmation class
- No Membership Course
- Show this year's Euros and Olympics at All Saints
- Follow up Christenings
- 'Start' Membership courses
- Men's Breakfasts on Saturdays (Red Lion do a breakfast for £7.5 or £8.5 and provide a room after the meal for a speaker) – keep the talk to 20 mins....
- Lunch Club – Men's and Ladies
- Leaflet drops of Events

HOMEWORK:

1. What practical suggestions do you have for ways the church could help equip its members to be witnesses?

- Join the Thornton Gala
- Pray for involvement in politics
- Food Bank and Homeless Projects
- Involvement in C.A.P
- Night-school Courses to be held at All Saints
- Form a Choir
- Prayer
- Meet in groups of 2 or 3 to talk and encourage one another
- Listen to what God is saying
- Personal Revival
- Get out of your comfort zone
- Watch 'inspiring' evangelists on Church TV / Screen
- Have an AWAY DAY with a ;guest speaker'
- Christening Services follow up and review of Service content – shorter service, and repetition of songs lines tend to bore the non-Christian attendee – why not turn the Christening into an All Age Service which is more compatible with visiting the congregation
- Queues for a drink after the service are too long and put people of staying and socialising especially visitors – have more distribution points around the church

- Try not to have Communion during Christenings – they do not understand and all we do is bore them
- Follow-up phone calls and visits to the bereaved
- Christmas Cards to the local community
- Have a testimony spot during the Morning Service
- Have a fortnightly Revival Meeting
- Train on how to talk to friends and neighbours about Jesus
- Print 'Credit Card' sized business cards which members can give to people they come into contact with which advertise All Saints and its' meetings
- A booklet explaining what we do and what all the Groups are etc
- QUESTION – is it wise to commit all our time with Church orientated work/events leaving no time to socialise with non-church goers?
- QUESTION – do we have a Statement of Faith?
- COMMENT - Evangelising Church Goers is an easy option

A letter was also received from a member of the Church who did attend one of the Course meetings with the following suggestions:

*Sports: Football for all age groups with Cricket in summer
The bowling green at the top of North Drive is closed – could All saints rent it from the council and use it for bowling teams?*

Outside Activities – use Jubilee Gardens for outdoor activities ie: BBQ, Craft Market, Music.

Week 5: Growing Leaders for Jesus Christ

Discussion 1: Why are people reluctant to volunteer?

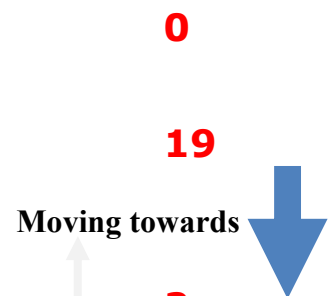
- Fear of failure
- People feel they may get 'stuck' with it if they volunteer
- Selfishness – what can All saints do for me – not vica versa
- People become burnt out as they are always the one to 'volunteer'
- Fear of rejection
- People are uncertain of the levels of commitment expected
- People feel inadequate
- Family commitments, work, children etc
- Unsure of gifting

What might encourage other people to get involved in serving / leading?

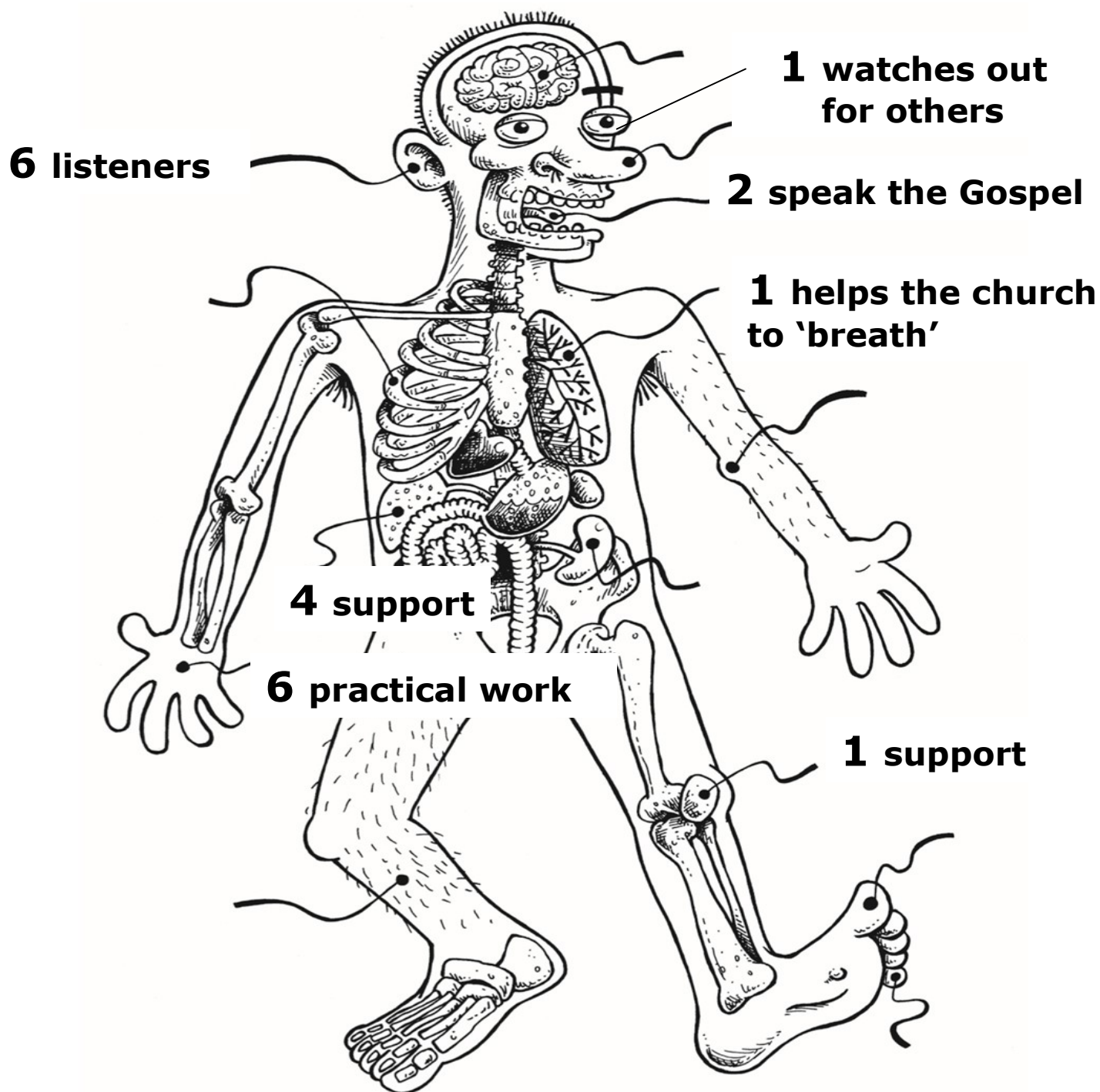
- Clergy to assist in people recognising their gifting
- Personal invitation to help – often people don't see their own gifting until someone asks them
- Have a day a year when we have a 'Freshers Sunday' tables in the Welcome Area and Meeting Room with people from all the different groups (Dorcas/Music/Youth/Onesis/Walking Group?table Tennis etc.etc) showing what they do and encourage people to attend.

Discussion 2: In the Diocesan Models – which do you think All Saints fits into?

- A. Clergy delegate some tasks to others
- B. Clergy delegate some tasks and some Authority to others to act at various levels
- C. Everyone has a ministry, clergy tasks Include connecting, encouraging & Coordinating others



Discussion 3: As a body what part do you see yourself as?



Course Feedback

Q1. What do you feel now after completing the course?

- It has made me think about 'how we do church'
- Good place to share ideas, suggestions and experiences
- Good to meet and talk with different people and get to know them better
- Good to have input from the Diocese
- Music on the video made it difficult to hear
- Encouraged that the Diocese/the Church are open to new ways of doing things
- Very interesting, necessary and about time. Should have been done years ago
- Encouraged
- Positive – can see we're doing some stuff effectively but need to work on other areas
- Good timing at start of year – food for more thought
- Excellent course, really getting to grips with some issues
- Better informed
- Lots to think about and perhaps some things to change my mind about
- Discussion were good, thought provoking
- Lots of good ideas about things we could do to develop and improve our already healthy church
- Encouraged that we are broadly moving in the right direction

Q2. Did you find the 60 minute sessions long enough?

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| A. Just the right length | 9 |
| B. Too long | 0 |
| C. Could have done with more time | 12 |

Q3. Has it made you change the way you look at Church?

- Yes – in terms of structure and its place in the community
- Not really x 3
- Positive feeling
- Yes – feel encouraged to start new project
- To a certain extent but I think those that didn't attend need to hear about it

- Yes – made me consider prayerfully areas I do work in the church and whether there are others, or should I be doing something different
- Only that I would like more people to share the work and to come to prayer meetings
- Yes – in some parts
- Yes – in that I should find out my part in the church body
- I hope to be able to offer more time to church activities
- Not really – feel it’s heading the right way and my view is consistent with it. Also believe in the all member ministry and delegation of authorities, within safety of some controls

Q4. On a scale 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you mark this course?



Q5. Finally – do you have any comments or suggestions you would like to make?

- Updates at the front of the church re: Vision 2026 would be helpful
- This was an interesting and timely course
- More informal meetings would be helpful in making people feel more included in the Church
- Would be good to have follow-up group or sessions to work out what we take going forward so that none of the ideas/enthusiasm are lost but also so that it doesn’t all fall to one person

Conclusions

An attendance of 17% of the Church membership was, in my opinion a good response, and which reflected the decision to have two identical groups but at different times of the day to make the Course as available to as many as possible.

People were very committed to making this Church as open as could be to all areas of the local community and were full of ideas in which we could reach / include our 'neighbours'.

If anything the Course was too short, I decided on an hour and the recommended time frame was 90 minutes. With everyone's input, ideas and discussion points 90 minutes would have been easily filled, but I chose an hour and this did suit some people better.

Is All Saints a healthy Church? A question we broached directly and indirectly. The answer was very positive in that we are 'getting there', we may still have a way to go but on the right path. The leadership and those who help (seen and unseen) are committed to the work of God and are able to pass their enthusiasm on.

Concerns were three fold, firstly the local community, newcomers and even some of our existing congregation do not fully know what we do/offer, some of our terminology/names of groups do not say really what they are and as a result newcomers are confused and our local community do not know what we offer.

Secondly the Church does not always appear as a Church to the local community, some people have thought we are a working men's club and many only recognise us as the Church with the Anchor outside.

Thirdly, there was a perception that although we have a good attendance and newcomers join us frequently we don't always seem to be able to hold onto people, as fast as people join people are leaving. This could well be the way it is within most churches but it would be good if we could encourage people to stay and work with us.

The recommendations are a reflection of how people saw ways and means of remedying these perceived issues.

Recommendations & Response.

Following Stefs return from his sabbatical leave he and I sat down and discussed at great length the following recommendations, I have placed the responses in italic:

1. Update the Church Mission Action Plan (MAP).

The Mission Action Plan does require a review but in reality the existing three actions highlighted by it still stand. The MAP should be updated and made available primarily on the Church Website. The Vision Champion to ensure that this is completed.

2. Put the Church Vision and Mission Action Plan onto the Church Website, make it more visible.

The MAP and the Statement of Belonging should be made available and visible on the Church Website, the Vision Champion and Web designer to work together to ensure this occurs.

3. Organise an Indoor Street-Party to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's 90th Birthday Party.

This was taken to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and agreed to host as suggested. A team is now in place and arrangements for the event are well under way.

4. Update the Welcome Pack and ensure that all the different groups are identified and explained in a clear and jargon free manner.

A new leaflet has been produced and is in the process of being printed. It will be available for All Saints use but will also be distributed 'door to door' to the local community starting June 2016. A suggestion was also submitted for 'Credit Card' sized All Saints advertisements which will also be produced and distributed for Church members to use as a mission resource.

5. Investigate the practicalities and possibilities of going into the two local schools in our parish and provide Christian Services at assemblies.

The two local schools identified here are Norbreck and Anchorsholme. Norbreck is in All Hallows parish boundaries and they do indeed provide school assemblies. Anchorsholme has assemblies provided particularly with the Blackpool Schools and Youth Work (BSYW) teams. Anchorsholme also have their

Christmas and Easter celebrations at All Saints itself. In effect both schools do currently have Christian input during scheduled morning assemblies with Anchorsholme also having input from All Saints.

- 6. Place a banner on the side of the Church, alongside the ALPHA Banner or sign-write on the white boarding across the front/entrance of the church with the scripture John 3:16 written in full.**

This is a very interesting suggestion, the Church building does have 'All Saints' and a Cross prominently displayed but is this enough? That was the question raised, Stef would like further discussion as to how address this. A couple of suggestions have been raised and need further consideration.

- 7. Have quarterly 'Men's Breakfasts' held on a Saturday Morning. A time of fellowship, a simple meal and a 15 minute teaching video.**

Stef agreed that we should hold events like this for both Men and Women. September sees the Blackburn Diocese 'Crossroads' mission event and this would be a good time to have a Men's Breakfast and a 'Bliss' event.

- 8. Send a first birthday card and an invitation to any child, and the parents/God-parents, who has been Baptised in the Church.**

All Saints does have a system in place whereby we do send Birthday Cards and invitations out on the anniversary dates of Baptisms.

- 9. Have a 'Fresher's Sunday' where stalls are placed in the foyer/entrance area. Have on display all the things we do in the Church i.e.: DORCAS, Onesies, Greenhouses etc. and have someone at each stall to explain what they are and encourage people to join.**

This is, as are many of the others, an excellent idea and we will hold a 'Fresher's Sunday' as soon as we can organise one after the Crossroads Mission Event in September.

- 10. It is difficult for newcomers to 'decipher' the Notices, "what is Dorcas or MAF?" – on the Notices put a simple explanation next to the name we use which describes it ie: Dorcas – Craft Group.**

We will have a 'Whats On' leaflet available for new comers/visitors to the Church. We also have a Website which we can direct people to. Currently the Notices do (not every 2 weeks) have simple explanations as to what we do ie: Dorcas – crafts.

- 11. ArchBishop Welby has called for a 'Week of Prayer' for the local community and our work in it to be hosted in May 2016. The Vision 2026 Course participants had already considered this as a way forward in our 'open to the community' mission.**

Although we won't be doing this in May, due to people's availability, we shall hold a Week of Prayer for our local community and mission hopefully July 2016.

- 12. Advertise Church events in the local 'freebie' publications ie: Link**

Stef has provided the Church details/services etc to one of the main local editions and as we find the contact details of others we shall send them our service times etc as well.

- 13. Present a summary of the Study Course to the 'Main Congregation' one Sunday Morning.**

Probably not what the Sunday Services are for, more for praise and worship and time for Him to talk with us. This report should go on the Church Website and made available for our congregation to read.

- 14. Look at working with the local council with regards the library and park areas – can we provide a service for them and the local community?**

A good idea but hard to see where we could fit into this at the moment, the library is council run still and the park is looked after by a volunteer group of local residents. If there does become an opportunity for us to be a part of these ventures then we shall review this idea again, at the moment though there seems little we could do to partake in their running.

15. Restart 'prayer triplets' or re-advertise if still ongoing.

Prayer Triplets have never really gone away and some do exist within the Church. If people want to start or join a Prayer Triplet Stef will be more than happy to assist.

16. Hold a follow-up feedback session for those who attended the Vision 2026 Study Course.

Yes – the Vision Champion to arrange a combined meeting in June for a feedback session – update of what is being done and ongoing queries.

17. Run a 'Discipleship Course' – investigate which is best to run.

Primarily the Greenhouse initiative is to disciple All Saints but we do hold The Freedom in Christ Discipleship Course as and when required.

18. Have a 'Clean the Park' Day and Picnic in Anchorholme Park during the summer, invite the local Councillor/MP.

These events do take place and are organised by the Friends of East Pines, if they require assistance or stop doing these then we would review if we would take a more active role in assisting but at present we are not required.

19. Invite Paul Maynard MP if he would like to hold his constituency surgeries at All Saints.

The Local Councillor for Anchorholme currently uses All Saints for his 'Surgeries' and Paul Maynard is also aware of All Saints as a venue. It must be noted that the Sevenoaks Café which All Saints runs is often attended by the local Councillor and Paul Maynard has also been.