

**The Methodist Church in Chepstow most often speaks of itself as a family. Within this extended family children and young people are valued for themselves. It is the responsibility of the whole church, solemnly undertaken at the baptism of every child, to nurture them and enable them to grow to that wholeness of life which we experience in Jesus, and which our loving God wills for all.*

“We are mindful that the quality of our family life is the most important determining factor in the growth to Christian maturity of our children and young people. In addition we are committed, as a priority, to providing those contexts and activities in which they can worship, learn, be cared for, listened to, enjoy themselves and know that they are valued and taken seriously as co-equals within God’s family.”

These are notes from the Chepstow Methodists Church’s 2008 Vision and Objectives document 2008.

Introduction

At the September Church Council it was agreed that a meeting would be held of the Family focus Project Management and Funding groups, plus other interested people, to discuss the future of the project beyond the current project phase. The current project is for 3 years September 2009 – August 2012. This would allow time for wider church consultation and funding applications.

A meeting of the group was held on 11th October and was attended by Rev Andrew Webster, Angela Horder FFP worker, Tony Watkinson, Lesley Kelly, Brian Lloyd. The group discussed various aspects of the current work, and future opportunities. It was agreed that one of the first priorities was to build on and consolidate the current work of outreach, mission and activities in the church. It was also agreed that care needs to be taken to focus resources and develop long-term sustainable quality activities, rather than stretching resources too thinly.

It was agreed that a draft vision would be prepared and would be presented to various church groups for discussion and feedback. The following draft vision to form the basis of that discussion:

To build on and strengthen the work of the Family Focus Project to develop and build a Church Community that is relevant to the needs of the families of today across all generations. This would include:

1. Nurturing people’s relationships with each other and with God across all age groups, *eg:*
 - *Develop opportunities to meet with and support “dads”; ensuring support and activities for families particularly with on-going faith based activities for tweenagers and teenagers*
 - *supporting grandparents.*

1. Developing relevant and meaningful worship opportunities for families and their children as they grow up in the church; eg:
 - *Further developing Fresh Expressions activities such as Messy Church;*
 - *Investigating and introducing adult-based initiatives for appropriate worship and faith time/space for families who come into Messy Church and Parent and Toddlers.*

2. Developing members' talents and skills to engage in the changing nature of church activities, particularly focused on changing family patterns in today's society; Eg:
 - *Building teams to lead initiatives such as Messy Church to ensure its sustainability and provide appropriate training for members involved in Fresh Expressions of church.*
 - *Involving all groups and members in the church to contribute to family focus activities, eg. the making of the Bible Story Activity Packs and other opportunities that arise through the project.*
 - *Teaching in small group, house group and church service setting to backup and underpin the principle of developing these talents and skills in a church relevant to the world today.*

3. Serving families and one another in the church community; eg:
 - *Communicating with all members of the church family and ensuring that there are opportunities for members join in;*
 - *Providing crèches facilities for worship and faith activities;*
 - *Developing Parenting courses;*
 - *Providing on-going training for leaders and helpers;*
 - *Developing faith support for leaders and leadership teams involved in Family Focused activities*

4. Enabling families and members to develop spiritual, social and pastoral support networks; eg:
 - *Providing opportunities for mature church members to provide "grandparenting" support for families who do not have easy access to such support;*

- *Providing opportunities for “baby-sitting circle” for families including those who may find this difficult, eg. lone-parents, families with a parent working away;*
 - *Developing appropriate pastoral support for families who come into contact with the church, eg. through Messy Church*
 - *Providing Pastoral Care Team Training to support pastoral support initiatives.*
 - *Mentoring parents who have come to faith with opportunities for them to take part in small groups where spiritual growth can take place and be ongoing, considering baby-sitting support to facilitate this.*
5. Contributing to activities to support the social needs of families in the wider Chepstow community, eg:
- *Investigate local community issues, including meeting with external agencies, to develop appropriate opportunities to work with families in the wider community; “DrugProofing Your Kids” programmes in schools on a regular basis;*
 - *Working with isolated parents in “dormitory-style estates”;*
 - *Working with parents in geographic groups on the outskirts of Chepstow;*
 - *Working with young mums and parents.*