

# A Strategic Review 2017

for Christ Church with St Mary's, Swindon

Part 1: Interviews, analysis, observations and recommendations

Phil Mansfield, July-December 2017

# Contents

1	Summary of Observations and Recommended Strategic Focus Areas.....	3
1.1	Context.....	3
1.2	Summary of Observations.....	3
1.3	Recommended Strategic Focus Areas.....	4
2	The Strategic Review.....	5
2.1	Purpose.....	5
2.2	Objectives.....	5
2.3	Approach.....	5
2.4	Output.....	5
3	Observations and Recommendations.....	6
3.1	Strengths.....	6
3.2	Awareness of the Challenges.....	6
3.3	Clarity of vision and mission.....	6
3.4	Objectives, strategy and planning.....	7
3.5	Governance, decision making and working groups.....	7
3.6	Welcome, communication, relationships, home-groups and pastoral care.....	8
3.7	Worship and teaching.....	9
3.8	Children, young people, young families and an ageing congregation.....	9
4	Detailed Observations and Recommendations.....	10
4.1	Awareness of the Challenges.....	10
4.2	Clarity of vision and mission.....	11
4.3	Objectives, strategy and planning.....	12
4.4	Governance, decision making and working groups.....	14
4.5	Welcome, communication, relationships, home-groups and pastoral care.....	16
4.6	Worship and teaching.....	19
4.7	Children, young people, young families and an ageing congregation.....	21
5	Appendix 1 - Interviewees.....	22
6	Appendix 2 - Interview questions and rationale for asking.....	23
7	Appendix 3 - Documented material.....	25

# 1 Summary of Observations and Recommended Strategic Focus Areas

## 1.1 Context

Mainstream parish church with ageing and decreasing congregation. It finds itself dealing with reality of 21<sup>st</sup> century town-based busy lifestyles that is hitting many churches. There are limited monetary and skills resources. It is also grappling with the big question about how to translate relevancy into the community in which it finds itself.

## 1.2 Summary of Observations

- **Clarity of Vision and Mission:** Most people interviewed knew the current vision or gist of it. Most thought it was appropriate, though many thought it was fairly generic and not specifically unique for CC<sup>1</sup>. People listed many different areas of current activity around its mission. Whilst this suggested there was lots of activity, I wondered if there was not enough messaging, context and a consistent story to focus people down to a few key areas.
- **Objectives, Strategy and Planning:** There is little cross-church strategy articulation, forward planning and prioritization in most areas of church. Attempts to improve this have generally failed from lack of cohesiveness.
- **Governance and decision making:** People listed a number of Simon's skills, e.g. encouraging spiritual growth, commissioning people, developing and maintaining a strong network outside of the church. Delegation happens through the various PCC, Standing Committee (SC), Working Groups (WGs), staff team, etc. Some other and complementary skills seem either not to be brought forward or present in the wider leadership. This may not help delegation of accountabilities, or help people to seek and take ownership of their own responsibilities. There was some evidence where governance was weak due to the absence of a clear plan and no tracking of actions and accountabilities.
- **Welcome, Communication, Relationships, Home-Groups and Pastoral Care:** Communicating what the church is up to was limited, e.g. PCC, and/or there was no translation of key messages. The news-sheet was not clearly sectioned, appears crowded and is hard to assimilate for a new-comer. There is under-utilisation of web-site due to it appearing overcrowded and largely with out of date content. Pastoral care exists in pockets. There is limited relationship-based networking and support. Young families are not supported beyond welcome. Generally the existing home-groups present little openness to welcoming new-comers or to potentially work to promote a future strategy.
- **Worship and Teaching:** Although there are multiple worship services, they are similar in nature, having no promoted distinctives. Attempts at less formal worship have not currently taken hold, with no success criteria for this. Application of teaching is limited and is not generally or regularly enabled in the Home-Groups. Any teaching application or future strategy direction would be difficult, due to strongly independent Home-Groups. Access to relevant teaching for young adults and families is limited.
- **Children, Young People, Young Families and Ageing Population:** Everyone interviewed appreciated these groups present the greatest challenge. This is not unique to CC, as other local churches are also struggling with a change in culture, family pressures of time and relevance of faith. Most agreed change was necessary but had to be done sensitively and the reasons communicated. Generally people thought a youth/young families worker of some description may be beneficial. With few in this sector, other changes to address relevance were required. The reasons for presenting "Paradigm Shift" were not fully understood, with most wanting to know the "so what".

---

<sup>1</sup> Where CC is used throughout, it means Christ Church with St Mary's, Swindon.

### 1.3 Recommended Strategic Focus Areas

- Re-examine the vision, i.e. what is CC's direction, and improve how this is communicated
  - Develop a strategy and prioritise the emerging plan
  - Form a Strategy Development and Planning Group, which includes a plan review mechanism
  - Review Working Groups in relation to emerging strategy
  - Improve governance around upward reporting and tracking accountabilities and actions, i.e. a standard "what / who / by when" log/table.
  - Overhaul website
  - Review the cultures around Home-Groups and "welcome"
  - Review worship / services offering
- 
- Employ church worker (will impact areas that also require strategic change, i.e. this will not solve things singularly)

A summary and detailed recommendations are made to address these headlines in sections 3 and 4.

## 2 The Strategic Review

### 2.1 Purpose

The strategic review's purpose is to help CC develop a practical church vision and plan. This must be easy to understand and communicate. It must be prioritised and supported by the right structures, so that it can effectively form the basis of future actions in the development of the church.

The review was undertaken between July and December 2017 at the request of CC so that the PCC can better understand CC's strengths and weaknesses, and therefore form a prioritized plan for 2018 onwards. It also sought to learn how the governance structures around the management of a plan could be improved, to best ensure that a future plan succeeds with the limited amount of resources available to CC.

I interviewed 23 of the members of CC (see Appendix 1) using a set of previously unseen questions. These were in the areas of vision, decision making, challenges specifically around children and youth work, worship, strengths, communication, home-groups, PCC and working groups. I also looked at one-year's PCC and SC minutes, the news-sheet, the web-site, WG meetings' notes and "Creating Connections" material.

Part 1 focused on the current state, by examining documents and interviewing, in order to get a broad picture of what works well and where there are current areas of weakness or concern. This picture is a necessary step in order to put in place any structures to best ensure that a future vision and plan (see future Strategy Review part 2) is set and prioritized appropriately, with the right governance in place, to best ensure sustainability and success.

### 2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the review were:

- to review and comment on how the currently articulated CC vision, mission, objectives, plan, activities and structures (e.g. PCC, SC, WGs) hang together as a cohesive set
- to assess the above and comment on their ability to support a 3-5 year plan, given the limited resources available
- to review people's understanding of the above, specifically the current Church Plan, through a series of interviews with church members
- to review and comment on how CC communicates the above, both the messaging and the formats
- to the work with CC to agree any recommendations I make and agree a set of priorities to effect that change

### 2.3 Approach

The strategic review material was drawn from both a set of responses to interview questions summarized in Appendix 2 (which includes the rationale for asking these questions) and supplied documented material listed in Appendix 3.

Out of scope for the review was the day to day operational activities of the church, e.g. resourcing worship services, rotas, finance, buildings etc.

### 2.4 Output

Having identified a number of observations and recommendations in Part 1 of this review, the purpose and output of Part 2 will be to form an agreed plan for the Annual Report 2017. Such a plan will be prioritised to best fit with the size and resources available and to make it as efficient and deliverable as possible.

## 3 Observations and Recommendations

After a general section on strengths articulated during the interviews, summary observations and recommendations from each category examined are described, which were drawn from more detailed observations and recommendations found in Section 4.

### 3.1 Strengths

- What do people say CC is good at?
- Are these sentiments universal or are there strong differences of opinion?

There was a range of opinions, from the provisioning of baptisms, marriages and burials, to choral services, to Community Centre, a good set of caring friendships, the ability to spend money resourcefully, to delivering a re-ordered building to cost and time, to a lot being achieved by a very limited number of volunteers. At the other end of the scale, a limited few said there were many things CC didn't do well at.

There were also some strong differences of perception around whether something was a strength. This was probably driven by individual hopes and frustrations. Key perceived strengths to note, that polarised opinion (i.e. where one person listed something as a strength, another listed it as a weakness), were:

- services in general;
- children and young people services,
- worship variety,
- welcome,
- prayer,
- engaging with community.

This means that some strength areas also appear under challenges or weaknesses, and it should be enquired as to how wide a view or a blockage this perception is, if CC is to move forward.

### 3.2 Awareness of the Challenges

#### 3.2.1 Observations

The observations from interviews came from people who have been at CC from between 2 and 62 years. Before going into more specific challenges, I wanted to test whether there was a collective and uniform awareness of the challenges, i.e. did people think there were many or few; did people agree on the same ones?

People were generally able to share about 8-10 unique challenges (see detailed challenge observations) with relative ease. Children and young families was the major challenge expressed but not uniquely top of everyone's opinion. People were well aware of a common set of challenges when pressed to name others. I am not convinced people discuss them openly enough outside the mechanisms of the PCC. Therefore, rather than there being a healthy collective mindset able to air and share the challenges, there may exist a fear of upsetting people, who are clearly trying their utmost to make the best of difficult circumstances.

#### 3.2.2 Summary recommendations

Being open and honest about all the challenges will help in developing a prioritized plan. Having a principle of openness, honesty and shared responsibility will also start to focus on those challenges that are perceived as more important or more easily tackled together.

### 3.3 Clarity of vision and mission

#### 3.3.1 Observations

Nearly everyone interviewed knew the gist of the current vision, some word perfectly! Whereas everyone agreed the vision and mission were about the ability to connect people in and outside of the church with the gospel and how it influences people's lives, some questioned whether the current vision is unique enough for CC and tangible enough to spur any specific direction of travel.

The expansion of that vision became a little less clear when tracking other expressions of the same vision across other documents. This was most noticeable on the website, where the use of the word “vision” meant a number of things to do with hope, intent, direction and characteristic. This position has probably arose organically.

### 3.3.2 Summary recommendations

Re-examine vision:

- Establish whether there is an appetite to re-examine the vision. It may be that the vision is fine but the greater weakness is in the translation into a set of objectives, strategy, approach and plan.

Re-examine currency of sub-vision statements:

- Examine the sub-vision statements around “We are committed to...” to ensure currency and whether these are actually other statements, e.g. shared intent, strategy, etc.

## 3.4 Objectives, strategy and planning

### 3.4.1 Observations

All the PCC interviewed had read the Annual Report; some additionally as authors, co-authors or reviewers.

There was no clear objectives, strategy or plan. The expressions of intent for any one future year, or years, were often boldly said, but with little follow-through, either in terms of use of language, adoption of themes or tracking at PCC or WG level.

Many statements about the intent to progress initiatives cropped up in PCC, SC or WG documents but most seemed to show no committed follow-up (one example was a skills review). The very practical groups around finance and buildings showed greater traction on their individual objectives, which probably suggests that other groups lack the ability to determine or gain traction through lack of any overarching priorities.

### 3.4.2 Summary recommendations

Define a strategy and prioritised plan:

- Define a set of objectives, a strategy to deliver those objectives and a plan of activities that is prioritized for the next period.

Form a Strategy Development and Planning Group:

- Some simple improvements will help land future direction, but the major weakness here is the lack on any group focused on defining objectives and strategy and determining a workable and prioritized plan, A distinctive group would ensure it is followed-through in a number of coordinated ways, i.e. continuity of language, embedding, communicating and re-communicating, tracking and identifying accountability and ensuring the right Working Groups were in place.

## 3.5 Governance, decision making and working groups

### 3.5.1 Observation

Simon’s gifts were listed as “many”. His presence seems to empower people. This was reported as beneficial but also the absence of his presence seemed to give way to lower empowerment, almost hesitancy. This should not be if the right governance and empowerment is in place for effective decision making.

Partly this was expressed through a lack of quality, visibility and consistency in the application of some governance, but also through the accompanying lack of a prioritized plan and group able to direct the plan.

Some of the observations around lack of traction in many initiatives seemed to result from a simple lack of governance structure in meetings, e.g. lack of action tracking and ownership. Some meetings strayed from their intended purpose, or WGs setting Terms of Reference that do not establish adequate clarity, ownership or reporting upwards.

### 3.5.2 Summary Recommendations

Improve consistency in the Terms of Reference of the PCC, SC and WGs and the visibility of these:

- Re-examine the visibility, consistency of the various ToR for the governance bodies and the suitability of those and how they report into the PCC and SC.
- Some small changes, coupled with the strategy and planning recommendations, could have a stabilizing and empowering effect.

## 3.6 Welcome, communication, relationships, home-groups and pastoral care

### 3.6.1 Observations

People expressed comfortability with the church in general, but when you prodded a bit, they started to unpack a sense that the many services hindered any sense of “one Christ Church”. The sense of feeling welcomed in, into or by CC seemed to polarize people’s views. The news-sheet and welcome messages from the starts of services helped a little with information flow and connectivity. The services seemed self-isolating rather than helping to connect all the church together. Many people appreciated the home-groups, but these created islands.

Pastoral care happened within these Home-Groups but a large proportion of the congregation/s did not attend these, so there was little sense of pastoral care being cohesive. Particularly young families felt isolated from the rest of the church.

There was no utilization of Home-Groups for wider messaging, teaching, contributing to services or a sense of “one church”. There was a lack of willingness for these being the vehicles for welcoming and growing church, which is present in the principles of other churches.

The parish office and support it provides made a massive contribution to messaging. This seemed for many to be a single “go-to” point, probably with an over-dependency on this.

The news-sheet remained the principle vehicle for communication. However, some of the messaging got lost in the detail and due to the simple formatting style.

The website was under-used. It was not easy to assimilate the information, find or search for things; I quickly landed on out of date content or blogs.

The output from PCC was not proactively shared and readily accessible. Together with no strategy and plan, this may be contributing to a lower than expected sense of people feeling they are connected centrally to “one Christ Church”.

### 3.6.2 Summary recommendations

Improve welcome:

- With a review of its structure, the news-sheet could gain more clarity of message.
- Improve access to the activities of the PCC, including translating and communicating what it is up to
- Review the structure and currency of the content on the website for internal and external audiences
- Re-examine the culture of being a welcoming church

Signpost pastoral care:

- Improve how pastoral care is organized, signposted and accessed

Improve the co-working together of all the Home-Groups:

- i.e. how Home-Groups contribute to the strategic intent of the church needs to be re-examined.

The worship review, next section, is key to the church removing fragmentation and building “one-church”.

## 3.7 Worship and teaching

### 3.7.1 Observations

CC showed a very strong choir-based service model, which was appreciated by and fits with the parish baptism, marriage and funeral requirements. This may not suit the emergence of more informal and participatory styles of services that other churches are offering. There seemed to be an unusual reluctance or empowerment to participate from the congregation, either to receive or serve. I wonder if there is a “minister does it all” culture, intended or not.

There were many services, but each with the same liturgical style. Each seemed to be insular with very little compulsion to “try” other services offered by CC. Although badged as different, some thought the services were uniform in approach and “same-y” in style.

The pulpit teaching was appreciated but there was quite a variation in applicational incentive. This was neither pushed through the Home-Group model, as with some denominations. New Christians that need the fundamentals of faith expositions would currently not find this in either the services or the Home-Groups. Alpha, or other vehicles for this basic teaching, would need to form part of any worship, teaching and homegroup review.

### 3.7.2 Summary recommendations

Undertake a worship review

- This should examine the needs, and then builds and informs a stronger delineation of types of services, empowers people and provides a teaching model for new and growing Christians. May be less is more in encouraging a stronger and more relationship-based “one church”.
- See also Review Home-Groups for new Christians and teaching exposition

## 3.8 Children, young people, young families and an ageing congregation

### 3.8.1 Observations

Against the backdrop of changes in culture, young families’ time pressures on Sundays and less emphasis on faith in schools, the Paradigm Shift teaching was unpacked to help the church become aware of the need for change.

The Paradigm Shift paper had made a number of suggested actions which had not yet materialized in incentivizing the church to think about change, although the PCC had agreed its broad intent.

There was broad agreement that a children and families worker had worked in the past to attract younger people into CC. There existed a “chicken and egg” concern that such a worker would be faced with an uphill challenge of few people currently in these age groups.

### 3.8.2 Summary recommendations

Plan change into the strategic plan:

- Against the backdrop of doing any change sensitively, there should be continuing planning of how change can be accommodated in CC if it is to become more welcoming and relevant to young people and young families.

Re-explain Paradigm Shift:

- Use the Paradigm Shift Paper as input to the wider church plan development.

Expand church worker responsibilities:

- Utilisation of any church worker would be well afforded in a wider context of welcome, social activities and networking for the existing young families.

## 4 Detailed Observations and Recommendations

### 4.1 Awareness of the Challenges

No.	Observations	Observation	Source
1-1	<p>Most people cited children and young families as one of the key challenges. Fewer articulated that it was a focus or there was any plan to respond. Clearly this perception or recall was gauged important or not by the responder's own direct interest in this challenge and/or involvement in different challenges.</p> <p>The Paradigm Shift report has not made it into people's consciousness of its message and relevance.</p>	See 7-1 CYF	Interviews
1-2	<p>The following were separately cited as some of the key challenges among those interviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping and attracting new people and young families;</li> <li>• ageing population,</li> <li>• finance,</li> <li>• welcome,</li> <li>• relevance,</li> <li>• lack of direction and priority,</li> <li>• burial ground,</li> <li>• resources with time and energy to commit to changing CC,</li> <li>• engaging with its own people,</li> <li>• succession planning (e.g. Warden, MU, Partnership)</li> </ul>	<p>A strategy and prioritised plan with appropriate communication will help here, see 3-3 and 3-5.</p> <p>Review the challenges cited and sense check these against the future plan. Decide if the plan is appropriately balanced against the perceived challenges.</p>	Interviews
1-3	There was a mix of spiritual answers to the challenges as well as some very practical stuff, but also a sense that there is no plan, focus or drive to resolve any/many of them.	A strategy and prioritised plan with appropriate communication will help here, see 3-3 and 3-5.	Interviews

## 4.2 Clarity of vision and mission

- Is there a vision and is it the right one?
- Is it visible, do people understand it and connect with it?

No.	Observations	Recommendations	Source
2-1	The website section about "Vision" is confused with the overall vision statement of the church. It is hard to decide what the vision is within several longer paragraphs of context and intent.	Vision section of website needs to be re-examined to ensure it describes the vision succinctly and is up to date. Need to break this down into a simpler vision and expand this through a few mission statements, broken down further by strategy.	3 Website
2-2	The website contains a number of other "lesser" vision statements under a section called "Vision", e.g. with references to development and renewal, and it is unclear if these are referring to physical or spiritual aspects of the church, or both.  The website vision section says "we would like everyone to work together": this comes across as patronizing; who is the "we"?  It could be more inclusive and organic; it reads a bit "here's your mission, off you go!".	The statements in the vision section need to be re-examined and re-written, and instead be framed as an explanation of background, context and intent.	3 Website
2-3	The " <b>We are committed to: 1. Jesus &amp; His Teaching; 2. Caring for God's World; 3. Respecting &amp; Helping Each Other</b> " are not vision statements but are internal statements of intent. Only No.3 is directly relevant to the current vision statement.	Examine where the news-sheet "we are committed to..." statements came from and what is their future, i.e. intended purpose and fit with future mission and objective statements	2 News-sheet
2-4	The Core vision is described as " <b>Engagement with our community</b> "	Ensure consistency of vision statement when quoted across multiple places.	1 Who we are
2-5	The current vision statement is about 15 years old. Some know it is a diocesan vision.  Some question whether it is unique enough for CC situation.  Some have also questioned whether it is the right vision statement for CC going forward.  About 70% people interviewed could remember enough of the gist of the current vision statement to suggest it has some prominence.	Review the relevancy of the current vision and decide if there is an appetite for a new vision.	Interviews

### 4.3 Objectives, strategy and planning

- Are there distinct objectives and do these relate to achieving the mission and the vision?
- What is the strategy for achieving the objectives, is there a plan?

No.	Observations	Recommendations	Source
3-1	The phrase "Move from a declining church to a growing one" isn't expressed elsewhere, but would normally be an objective, with a strategy of "how" behind it.	Agree if the statement "Move from a declining church to a growing one" is a key future objective.	1 Who we are
3-2	<p>It was encouraging that all those on the PCC read the annual report.</p> <p>However, there was no follow-through in the shape of the Annual Report into key areas of focus and structure at following PCCs. As an example, the "<b>Finding Jesus / Knowing Jesus / Serving Jesus headings</b>" (Annual Report ref 3) have not been followed through in any objectives, more recent PCC, news-sheets or website.</p> <p>If such statements are made in the Annual Church Report about key areas of focus or development, there needs to be agreement on action tracking these within the PCC and putting in place mechanisms to communicate these key areas and how the next level of detail will form.</p>	<p>If the PCC adopts any new structure or phraseology to express its aims and objectives, these must be followed through from the Annual Church Report down through its various communications to allow such expressions to land and become embedded in decisions and communications.</p> <p>Put in place an actions log/table format as part of standing agenda within key meetings, e.g. PCC, that is explicit about who is accountable for the action and by when.</p> <p>Put in place mechanisms to communicate these key messages as part of the language that defines CC.</p>	<p>1 Who we are</p> <p>8 Annual Report 2016 Documents</p> <p>Interviews</p>
3-3	There is a general confusion around what is the mission, strategy and objectives for CC	<p>Define clear statements of mission, strategy and objectives that sit below the vision.</p> <p>Define a prioritized plan, so that reason for new and current activities are traceable to the objectives and strategy.</p>	1 Who we are
3-4	There has been expressed a 12m review of people's gifts. This needs to be done within a context of an objective otherwise it's hard to prove why the effort is being expended to do this and for what gain.	Determine for what purpose is the exercise to review people's skills and gifts and therefore understand its priority.	1 Who we are
3-5	Paradigm Shift was one of several examples of where the church appeared to be at various levels of understanding about a new initiative that was not explained in general terms, it did not land clearly, and there was no follow-up put in place to clarify HOW organisationally it was going to be progressed, e.g. as part of Creating Connections Group, via the CYF WG, or other.	Put in place a formal mechanism to assist the prioritization, tracking and communication of new initiatives, i.e. a Strategy Development and Planning Group, that reports into the PCC.	7 Paradigm shift Interviews
3-6	There seems confusion as to whether the Creating Connections Group is continuing or has handed over (or back) responsibility to the CYF WG	There needs to be clarity over future role of Creating Connections Group, both in relation to CYF WG and in ongoing responsibility for HGs.	13b Creating Cnx

No.	Observations	Recommendations	Source
3-7	It is difficult to recognise either any <u>plan</u> of current activities or any structure around any priorities. Probably as a result, there were many answers given to what is CC up to at the moment, which points to the overall key messages of the church being more random than planned.	Develop a plan See also 3-5	Interviews

#### 4.4 Governance, decision making and working groups

- How are decisions made, are the congregation, supporters etc. involved in decision making?
- Are the vision, mission, objectives and plans of the church reviewed and adaptable to change?
- How do the Working Groups align to these strategies?

No.	Observations	Recommendation	Source
4-1	A review of the WGs must be on the basis of CC knowing what is important and what it wants to invest in, otherwise how does it know the WGs are the right ones to deliver change.	To review the WGs when there is an agreed set of objectives, a strategy and plan.	1 Who we are
4-2	A Creating Connections Group paper contained other material on general updates to the church team.	Ensure any advance meeting agendas have a clear sense of meeting purpose so that the scope is achieved.	13b Creating Cnx
4-3	<p>There are multiple examples of WGs saying they will commit to action and develop plans, which may be at a ToR level or at an individual meeting level, but then the mechanisms to ensure the WGs are accountable for these plans is easily lost, with little or no follow-through and re-visiting, e.g. WG ToR: "Will take a lead in developing plans etc."</p> <p>There is a variety of different styles of WG ToR which may suit some of the WGs better but also may lead to differing levels of success.</p>	<p>Perform a central re-write of all the WGs ToR to help them be clearer on their purpose and commitments. With the WG leader(s), part of this must include each WG to agree how frequently it will report back on progress and track actions.</p> <p>Ensure there is a regular reporting mechanism for delivery to plan for the WGs. This need not be uniform across each WG.</p> <p>Also 4-1 and 3-5</p>	<p>11 WGs: R&amp;Rs  Interviews  Documents</p>
4-4	<p>There are multiple examples of where meetings (e.g. PCC May 2016) makes several strategic statements but none appear to have been followed-through or adopted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A specific group including HG leaders to discuss Creating Connections - no further mention of such noted; then a proposal: That the PCC commits to changing the way we provide the relational support and development structure which currently exists through the home-group system.</li> <li>• That the PCC asks a small working group to develop more concrete proposals for implementing a new system of relational and learning groups. This may lead to the current system of home-groups being disbanded and the establishment of a new style of meeting together.</li> <li>• That the current seven working groups including the Community Centre group remain in place and continue to develop an outward focus to their activities;</li> <li>• Welcoming new comers and hospitality being a gap mentioned; raise our level of welcome.</li> <li>• A small steering group...</li> </ul>	See 4-2 and 3-5	PCC minutes  Documents

No.	Observations	Recommendation	Source
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight and management of the HGs needs to be a joint CF and M&amp;E responsibility.</li> <li>• The evidence is that people grow in faith when they join small groups.</li> <li>• “If HGs are so important, how is it that we have not previously prioritised their growth?”</li> <li>• We need to win hearts and minds as we consider any changes to the way our small groups operate.</li> <li>• We need to develop leadership skills in leaders and potential leaders of HGs.</li> <li>• PCC July 2016 noted Creating Connections Group to develop strategy in next 5 m - and with help of congregation to decide which plans to take forward</li> </ul>		
4-5	<p>There was a strong sense that what the Vicar said or backed happened. This isn't wrong in itself but it did suggest that there was either a reliance on his backing, or other people didn't command as great a sense of being empowered to allow new initiatives to succeed or be supported if he was not present.</p> <p>Simon's gifts are many particularly around encouraging and networking and this was widely endorsed however there appeared to be little forward planning and continuity to see decisions and actions realised or understand reasons things did not reach fulfilment. It was felt this was partly due to poor process but also due in part to Simons style and this could be overcome with corrective measures in place.</p>	See 3-2 and 3-5	Interviews
4-6	<p>Although there are a number of decisions and actions at the various PCC, SC and WGs, very few are tracked for updates or completion, which means that the message and intent surrounding key decisions, past strategy or intentions are lost, which sends the message that there is no commitment and accountability across the staff team and PCC.</p> <p>PCC meetings have a tendency to overrun and cram a lot of topics and supporting material into them. This can make it feel pressured to make informed decisions. That said, it was generally felt that PCC does make good decisions, and the PCC will now challenge if there is not the right information available or direction being sought with reason.</p>	See 3-2 and 3-5	Interviews
4-7	As an outsider looking in, it is difficult to both find and understand how the church runs itself and the differences between the PCC, SCs, staff team, and WGs.	<p>Publish the ToR and purpose of the various governance layers, i.e. PCC and SC, staff team, WGs, etc.</p> <p>Also see 5-9 (website visibility)</p>	5 SC minutes

#### 4.5 Welcome, communication, relationships, home-groups and pastoral care

- How effective is communication in general and for articulating vision, mission and intent?
- Do people at Christ Church feel welcome, welcomed and able to serve and grow?

No.	Observations	Recommendations	Source
5-1	The mention and value of future Alpha Courses seems assumed rather than tested against other actual or potential approaches for welcoming and discipling new people.	Alpha must be part of a wider review of how CC welcomes and builds relationships with new people into the church.	1 Who we are
5-2	It is not clearly stated what the more strategic objectives are for homegroups (e.g. as communication or teaching vehicles, how they do or should welcome new people, explain or promote mission, pastoral care, etc.) and therefore what is the strategy for developing them onwards?	A Home-Group review must form a component of a wider review on how existing and new people are built together relationally in CC.	1 Who we are
5-3	Although there were a few mentions of pastoral care, it was unclear how this operates formally and informally between the use of the buildings as vehicles for pastoral care, the services, the welcome, the website and the news-sheet.	Review how pastoral care is accessed and implemented and then be clearer on communicating these features.	11 WGs: R&Rs
5-4	Generally people felt the church needed to take a message out to the community but there was no shared understanding of the collective ways this was being achieved but rather it was either up to individuals or schools or messy church. This implied that the activities the church was up to in this space were not coherently communicated.	Make improvements to how the messages of the PCC and future activities of the church are communicated and translated to people so that they are in a consumable easy to understand format, e.g. summary of Annual Report, distillation of PCC minutes, etc.	Interviews
5-5	<p>The news-sheet remains the key vehicle of information.</p> <p>There are number of layout aspects of the present news-sheet that if improved would help with messaging and communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first few lines on the header of the news-sheet seem to give more sway to CC being part of the Old Town partnership than it being the news-sheet of CC</li> <li>• The charity ref does not need to be at the top of a news-sheet.</li> <li>• The website address is listed twice and is too prominent, given that people see the news-sheet as the primary communication vehicle.</li> </ul>	Re-examine the order of the messaging on the news-sheet	2 News-sheet

No.	Observations	Recommendations	Source
5-6	<p>One news-sheet that talked about "...our Children and Young Peoples leaders in advance of Andy Milne's visit to Swindon."</p> <p>It didn't say who Andy Milne is, or who our Children and Young Peoples' leaders are?</p>	<p>Ensure that all communications are mindful of the new or uninformed reader and do not assume knowledge.</p>	<p>2 News-sheet</p>
5-7	<p>The "contact us" section is quite hard to assimilate.</p> <p>To the outsider, it's not clear that the Parish Office is inside the Community Centre or what CC@CC means.</p>	<p>Look at the use of a simple 3-column table of who/what, address/email and phone no. to improve readability of "Contact Us" section.</p>	<p>2 News-sheet</p>
5-8	<p>The "Who we are" document, which also is reproduced in the Administrative Information of the Annual Report, is really useful basic information and context to the outsider. I have not seen this anywhere else, e.g. website.</p>	<p>Make the "Who we are" document more visible, e.g. as key information on the website.</p>	<p>1 Who we are</p>
5-9	<p>The website needs an overhaul as it contains much old material.</p> <p>It is quite hard to find key information about what the church is up to on the website.</p> <p>The website is not focused on its two audiences 1) the general public's needs, 2) the church members' needs. Most church websites are geared around information for "outsiders", e.g. services, baptisms, opening times, who is who, groups, etc., and information for "insiders", e.g. recent documents, news-sheets, what are we up to in terms of change and context, e.g. working groups, home-groups, finance, governance, plans, etc.</p> <p>How does the church relay this information to its congregation?</p> <p>Any effort here however must be in proportion to the observations that the website is under used and is not the first port of call for up to date news and activities.</p>	<p>Remove multiple out of date pages and blogs.</p> <p>The website needs to better serve both the public enquiring and the church member with news about the key focuses of the church plan.</p> <p>The website needs a major re-construction to make things easier to find, make it up to date with the key focuses of the church plan, and easily able to find things, e.g. PCC activities.</p>	<p>13b Creating Cnx Interviews</p>
5-10	<p>In spite of running series on being a welcoming church some feel the church is still not very good at hospitality, relating to newcomers and promoting a "one-church" based on relationships.</p>	<p>Re-examine the culture of being a welcoming church, not just the process, e.g. how do you challenge busyness and individual self-interests, how do you create more togetherness in pre- or post-church services, social opportunities, shared meals, home-group culture, discussing sermon topics, breaking down barriers to multi-choice Sunday services.</p>	<p>Interviews</p>

No.	Observations	Recommendations	Source
		Look at opportunities for better cross-church engagement and socials outside of Sundays to aid relationship building.	
5-11	<p>It is not widely known what the PCC does, how it communicates its direction to the church in general. Its messaging could be greatly improved.</p> <p>There is no overt awareness of what the PCC is up to by people not on the PCC and therefore difficult for people to know what the key focuses for the church are within the year.</p> <p>I was told the PCC minutes get posted on a noticeboard somewhere, but was uncertain if this was still the case.</p>	See 5-4	Interviews
5-12	<p>The home-groups are valued but they are unusually independent of the leadership team and of each other, meaning the leadership's ability to encourage numerical growth and change in the church via the home-group structure is ineffective and this could undermine future central navigation and direction.</p>	<p>If it is accepted that the existing HGs are not responsive to growth, an approach needs to be understood of how new people in the church are pastorally supported.</p> <p>Improve the connections between the HGs so that they become better communication vehicles of what is going on in CC.</p> <p>Re-examine barriers to home-groups being more open, influenced by and influential in the direction and teaching the church sets, e.g. is home-group culture open to change and welcome?</p>	Interviews
5-13	<p>The annual report was not as clear as it could be in terms of setting out a structured intent of future direction and priorities.</p>	See 3-2	Interviews

## 4.6 Worship and teaching

- What are the challenges?
- Do people agree with each other?

No.	Observations	Recommendation	Source
6-1	<p>Worship services do not have sufficient distinction to cater for diverse tastes</p> <p>Too much choice of worship services perpetuates fragmented congregations and does not aid one church and a relational-based congregation.</p> <p>The number of services there are means there are many congregations and people don't mix, which creates a dis-jointed church and lack of family and together-in-this.</p> <p>The choir services are enjoyed by most. There is not enough opportunity for distinctive services that either are Choir focused or without choir. This may be a blocker to young people and families if there is not sufficient time given to more informal styles of worship.</p> <p>Services can feel quite alienating for the un-churched, no explanation is given.</p>	<p>There needs to be a worship review.</p> <p>One purpose of the review would be to unite the different congregations occasionally.</p> <p>There needs to be a stronger differentiation between a number of services, those differences need to be clearly and easily explained using a number of formats and opportunities, and so that people who wish to choose with their feet can make a choice based on a strong difference between the services.</p>	Interviews
6-2	<p>Some feel there is not enough biblical teaching and application either from the pulpit or via the home-groups</p>	<p>The staff team could do more to assist teaching and mission being explored, e.g. in home-groups.</p>	Interviews
6-3	<p>There is a lack of congregational participation and opportunity given for creativity in services.</p> <p>There seems to be a real reluctance for people to offer to lead or to pray; whether this is due to the formality, or the size of the building or lack of asking from the clergy.</p>	<p>A worship review should challenge the basis that it must be the staff team that lead everything, to allow more people who want to participate. It should understand why people are unwilling to participate. It may be cultural, environmental or process.</p> <p>The HGs could be more active in leading or contributing to worship services, e.g. leading prayer, readings, a poem, etc.</p>	Interviews
6-4	<p>Few people accept prayer offers.</p> <p>There seems to be a reluctance for ministry or prayer at the services and the reasons why should be understood more so that ministry is more effective and a normal part of worship services</p>	See 7-3	Interviews
6-5	<p>Most interviewed saw the yearly verse as Simon's thing, i.e. principally Simon's decision as to which verse and how it was explained and used. It becomes one of many teaching focuses for the year.</p>	<p>The reason for having a yearly Bible verse needs to be given, so that people can connect with it and understand its yearly purpose.</p>	2 News-sheet

No.	Observations	Recommendation	Source
	<p>Some took it as a personal application, more than a collective. Some said it should be a collective thing too, but it depends on the verse.</p> <p>Some think it could be unpacked more in teaching and preaching sessions.in other years it may have been more collective.</p> <p>Most know there is a Bible verse, a slightly small number can have a good attempt at quoting it.</p>	<p>If the yearly Bible verse were to continue, it should be unpacked over a longer time in teaching, preaching and application.</p>	
6-6	<p>The opportunity to respond to sermons and increase application of teaching in HGs is at best limited, due to their autonomy and infrequent setting of any teaching series. This does not help church unity and the sense of one family.</p>	<p>See 7-2 and 5-2</p>	Interviews
6-7	<p>There exists a diversity of opinions on worship. Many said it is all a bit "the same", i.e. the songs and hymns that there are tend to be similar.</p> <p>The all-age service divided opinion. A few people liked it, as it is the one opportunity for non-liturgy, but most felt it didn't actually cater well for any age group nor all age groups, but at junior school age. People either stay away, or stay away because there's no communion, and no choir.</p> <p>There has been some trying to create more informality but this is still staff-team led and comes across quite formal.</p> <p>There is little room given for waiting on God be it in worship or prayer, which tends to spawn entertainment-driven and very structured worship. How do the services accommodate people who are becoming spiritually awakened?</p>	<p>A worship review should seek to understand how formality and informality can share the same space of worship, to allow some degree of waiting and anticipation.</p> <p>The All-Age service needs to be critically examined, e.g. who, structure, audience, focus, relevance, to re-vitalise its impact and drawing potential.</p> <p>The worship review should also ensure there exists coverage for a range of worship styles and preferences and critically review who have the right skills to lead these, and what is the right shared responsibility-mix between clergy and laity.</p> <p>More use must be made of the advantages of the re-ordered church including PowerPoint.</p>	Interviews

#### 4.7 Children, young people, young families and an ageing congregation

- What are the challenges and what is being done about them?
- Are the challenges internal or due to wider Society demographics and social trends?

No.	Observations	Recommendation	Source
7-1	<p>The reasons CC spent a number of weeks looking at the Paradigm Shift do not appear to have landed beyond adding weight to the need to attract more youth, which wasn't its purpose, and we could do with some specific resource to help us with this, which may have been an intention.</p> <p>For me, Paradigm Shift painted of picture of why and how CC needs to change or develop a different approach to mission and worship, relational church and the social support structures.</p>	<p>More could be done to feed a common understanding of what the church is up to in Children and Young Families Worker and Paradigm Shift.</p> <p>Don't be afraid to re-tell the Paradigm Shift story. Revisit and re-communicate it, partly because a refresher and progress update is useful but more importantly follow-through on some of the recommendations of Paradigm Shift and the impact on worship, relationships, welcome and social mission.</p>	Interviews
7-2	<p>There was a roughly equal split of opinion as to whether it would be right or wrong to employ a Children and Young Families Worker. This opinion was polarised, not in the sense of doubting whether a worker would help the situation generally, but whether you could expect a worker to jump at this opportunity given that there are currently few children and families. This was the classic "chicken" – you need to appoint someone to sort this – and "egg" – what would they do, there are none.</p>	<p>C&amp;YF worker: a) be very clear what the role and responsibilities are for this person, b) do not limit this to children, young people and families. There is a massive opportunity for this worker to fulfil a wider role and boost support in a number of specific areas, e.g. communication, networking, worship facilitation, pastoral.</p> <p>Consider if you could appoint and co-fund a more general church worker, (job title and description to be more encompassing), e.g. another Gareth.</p>	Interviews
7-3	<p>Many interviewed said that some of the older members of the congregation like their familiarity, so change needs to be done sensitively, however this can be an excuse for not being bold enough to make any changes.</p>	<p>Ensure change is managed and communicated in a consultative way explaining problems and benefits.</p>	Interviews

## 5 Appendix 1 - Interviewees

The following 23 people were interviewed as part of this review:

- Chris Smith
- David Howell
- Ian Farr
- Ailsa Palmer
- Julie Tucker
- Helen Parker-Drabble
- Stephen Grosvenor
- Daniel Pitt
- Caroline Pitt
- Mike Ranstead
- Janet French
- Simon Stevenette
- Anne and Anton
- Greg and Lizzie Kendall
- Daphne Hardwick (email)
- Norma McKemey
- Tim Eyles
- Carol Simmons
- Margaret Williams
- Pam Bridgeman
- Judith Hawkins

Note: some members of the congregation had seemed reluctant to put themselves forward to be interviewed.

## 6 Appendix 2 - Interview questions and rationale for asking

There were 21 questions, which each had a rationale for being posed.

No.	Question	Rationale for asking
1	Are you aware Christ Church has a vision statement? If so, what is it?	Was there a basic awareness that Christ Church has a vision statement, that was pointing people to a central rationale for mission. This was not a commentary on whether this was a good or timely vision, or necessarily a good statement of vision.
2	Are you aware Christ Church has a yearly Bible verse? If so, can you remember any of it? (Psalm 37 v5 Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him and He will act)	This was to see if a Bible verse which was set and reset annually was something that people caught hold of and could apply, if they chose to.
3	Do you see the verse as being an individual thing, or more corporate and related to the vision of Christ Church?	This was to understand whether people saw the Bible verse to be set and taught about for personal application or whether there was a sense that the verse should or did further unpack the vision of the church.
4	How do decisions get made in Christ Church?	This was to test people's understanding of who was setting the direction of the church, whether this was the same at all levels of decision or whether there was appropriate freedom to act through delegated accountabilities. It also began to test whether people thought decision making was empowered, effective or limiting the vision and direction.
5	Could the PCC be more effective, and if so how?	Although there was an unstated assumption in this question, i.e. that the PCC was not as effective as it could be, there would always be an element that decisions can be made more effectively. This was to test whether the ability of the PCC to make, sanction or devolve decisions worked, or whether there were other obstacles that made decisions slow or ineffective.
6	What is the role of the WGs?	This was to test whether people understood WHY they existed. Were they strategic or operational in intent, were they consistent or varied in their ability to drive the church forward in their areas of responsibility.
7	Tell me about HGs	This was not about WHY we have homegroups, but whether there was a common understanding about how many there were, whether there was a shared knowledge of them in terms of timings, number, differences in age, location and structure, and whether they came together successfully and whether they similarly shared the intent to be the relational fabric of the church
8	What is the role of the Home-Groups?	This was to test whether a traditional model of homegroups was understood in terms of a support network and to carry to greater or lesser extent the teaching, empowerment and spiritual growth and discipling the church and reaching out to the community and new growth.
9	How do you get to hear about what Christ Church is up to?	This was asked to test how many different vehicles of communication and engagement were in the common reach of people to know what was going on, but it also to get a feeling for how connected people felt, and whether the information had to be pulled or was freely available.
10	What is Christ Church up to at the moment in terms of new stuff or changes?	This was to test the extent that people believed the church has a calling and vision to change and adapt or remain fairly rooted in the existing structures and opportunities to serve and reach the community around. It wasn't just about what people said, in terms of whether new initiatives sprung to mind, but to test WHAT people considered were – to them – new initiatives, e.g. how big something needed to be to become to them a new initiative in their recall.

11	Do you read the annual report, if not why?	Although a yes/no answer, it framed the next question.
12	Do you know what 3 things are the currently areas of focus for 2017 for Christ Church? (Finding Jesus, Knowing Jesus, Serving Jesus)	This was to test how many of those interviewed thought the annual report was or should be the vehicle for describing the future, as well as the past, and whether there was any association in people's recall of the themes used in the report to frame any future vision or plan for development.
13	What does Christ Church do particularly well?	Although a simple question, it tested people's recall on what kind of things people were either proud of or had a sense of achievement and strong purpose to them. Of course a question like this initially can provoke people to think of the opposite, and it was partly to test people's mood towards optimistic versus pessimistic outlook.
14	If you were to summarise one of Christ Church challenges at the moment, what is it?	This was really to set the scene for a diverse set of issues across those interviewed and to start people to think further in the next questions.
15	What is Christ Church doing to address that challenge?	This was to test whether the people felt there was an air of participation, direction and a strong intent or plan, or whether this was lacking.
16	Are there any other challenges at the moment?	This was an opener to get a feeling for whether the interviewer perceived that there was a wealth of issues or whether there wasn't – even if there were.
17	Tell me about the worship challenges for the church	This focussed thinking on one of what I felt were two important issues; worship and children and youth. People would either have a perspective that they agreed there were challenges or that there weren't. I also wanted to try to get a picture of whether people saw the worship services as a connected expression of the whole church – and whether the church offered diverse expressions, or whether all expressions were similar. I also wanted to see whether people only focussed down on the challenges from the one (or few) worship services they attended or the wider perspective, which gave me a view on how connected the church felt it was to each other.
18	Tell me about the challenges and opportunities for children and young people	This was I felt the second important challenge area. I wanted to hear whether people felt the problem was of Christ Church's making or influence or something that it could not influence, because society had changed. I was looking for whether people had heard about employing a youth worker and what people thought, or whether people had heard of the Paradigm Shift and if it had landed with them.
19	Do you think a focus for a church in C21 is getting the church out to the people or getting people into church?	This was a bit tongue in cheek question, but it was also meant to see how wedded people were to services within the church or mission outside the church.
20	If there was one thing you think Christ Church can do differently or better, what is it?	Again a simple question, but one I was interested to gauge the extent to which those interviewed thought there were multiple small and varied problems or whether there were big ticket items that would make a massive difference if better addressed.
21	Do you have anything else you'd like me to know or consider in the review?	An opportunity for people to raise anything burning still after the set questions.

## 7 Appendix 3 - Documented material

The existing evidence as referenced below was sampled for the review, for evidence of vision, mission, objectives, strategy, etc. to form basis for opinion and comment:

Ref	Evidence
1	"Who we are" status notes of current development activities– updated to 5 July 2017
2	Weekly Service sheet (sample from 2 July 2017)
3	Web site (sampled July 2017)
4	All PCC minutes since April 2016
5	All SC minutes since April 2016
6	All WG minutes since April 2016
7	Paradigm Shift proposal v.24/7/17
8	Signed Annual Report 2016 (pdf) (Word version also on website)
9	Strategic Objectives 2017 – 2020 paper, draft 1 21 March 2017
10	Christ Church Aims and Objectives 2016, file dated 9.2.17
11	PCC Working Groups – Roles and Responsibilities, version draft issue 2, dated 28.1.17
12	PCC Working Groups Co-ordination meeting – 29 Jan 2017 – will use if finalised otherwise PCC Working Groups Co-ordination meeting - Sunday 20 Nov 2016, version dated 12/12/17
13	Creating Connections meetings 5.1.17 (13b) and 13.10.16 (13a)