

Manningham Uniting Churches Consultation

Monthly News from the Steering Group

May 2010, Issue 3

DEUC Town Hall Meeting Report

Doncaster East Uniting Church held its "Town Hall" meeting on Sunday April 11.

The barbeque was wheeled into position and a number of cooks provided a light lunch after church. The church was then set up with a series of small tables with around six seats to each table. Approximately 60 people found their way to the tables after lunch and the meeting began.

Phil and Dave from Ecclesia Consulting introduced the meeting concept and explained the process. We were presented with some scenarios and some questions relating to them and invited to record our responses. Each individual's response was noted and then discussed in the small groups with the outcomes from each table then recorded. Each table then reported back to the whole meeting their combined responses.

There was much discussion and sharing with Phil and Dave. Comments for each question were recorded on butcher's paper and together with the summary from the tables formed a list of outcomes from our Town Hall meeting.

These outcomes will be collated and reported back to the congregation as feedback.

The whole process as presented by Phil and Dave was open, low key and non-threatening. As facilitators they allowed us to dream of a future where mission and community are central to an emerging church in Manningham.

Doncaster East has completed the first two parts of the three parts of Stage 1: the meeting with the church council and the "town hall" meeting. The next activity will involve completing a survey made available to all people. Given all this activity the MCLT will reconvene at the conclusion of the third town hall meeting planned for mid May.

Ken Manson

MAKING DECISIONS IN THE UNITING CHURCH

As we progress through the consultation between our churches there will be points along the way when our congregations will need to make important decisions. Some of these decisions will be informal and some of them will be formal, possibly reshaping our relationship as congregations and our place in the wider church.

To date our three churches have charged the Manningham Churches Leadership Team (MCLT) with the task of exploring a shared future between us. As our sense of unity and cooperation deepens we may need to alter the way we are formally related.

Later in the year, if each congregation moves into Stage 2 of our consultation, we will be asked to make decisions about:

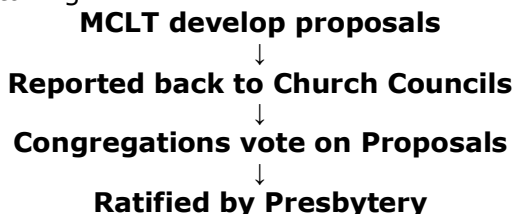
- authority and decision making structures
- appointment of ministers and other paid staff
- priorities and directions of our worship and mission, and
- finance and property issues.

These are stressful areas in the life of any organisation and so we must be sure that the way we conduct these processes is both consultative and transparent. Our forbearance and good will toward each other is a sign of Jesus' call to us to love one other.

When the time for decision making comes the MCLT will draft proposals which will be recommended to church councils for adoption by congregations. Neither the MCLT or any of the church council's can make binding, long-term decisions without their adoption by a formally constituted meeting of the congregation. Once we make these formal decisions the presbytery will be asked to ratify them.

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One of the tasks Presbytery is charged with is to ensure that our processes are consultative and transparent and comply with the necessary Uniting Church regulations. Yarra Yarra Presbytery are very supportive of the process we are undertaking.



Consensus explained: At the times when we are asked to make decisions there will be ample opportunity for questions and consultation and for us all to express our hopes and our concerns. Our debating and voting method for congregational meetings will be by consensus. This is a method which the Uniting Church has used effectively for more than 10 years now. Consensus decision making ensures that our meetings are more about discerning the future together than one group imposing their will upon others. This process allows for a mutual listening rather than an adversarial atmosphere which too often means that some get hurt or discarded along the way.

So watch out for those opportunities when you will be asked to help make a decision. With everybody's involvement we can most effectively be the Church.

Coming Events:

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| 2 May | Templestowe Town Hall Meeting after service with a shared lunch |
| 16 May | Pilgrim Town Hall meeting following a combined service and a shared lunch. |

Thoughts for the Month

The Ministry of the Baptized

This is something I have found to be true without exception: that when we, any of us, focus on things in our lives that are passing away, we get scared, we get anxious, we get depressed, we lose hope; and when we focus on things that are being birthed and are coming newly into creation, we get excited, we get imaginative, we get optimistic, we feel drawn closer to one another, we feel as if we have meaning and purpose in this life, and we have joy... we are given change as an ingredient in life. We can be frightened and anxious and resistant to it or we can embrace it as a tool to transform us." - Jim Kelsey (1952-2007)

Baptismal ministry is discipleship where all baptized share in Christ's identity and mission as the priesthood of all believers. Through baptism each person receives gifts for ministry through the Holy Spirit – gifts to be embraced and lived out in the church and in the world. Baptismal ministry maintains that the calling of each person is of equal worth and essential for the fullness of mission – that is, to restore all people to unity with God. Baptismal ministry maintains that the local community is the primary context for formation, ministry and mission. Beyond the congregation, baptismal ministry encompasses the whole work of the whole people of God in all times and all places.

The ALBAN INSTITUTE

From an Article by Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, Fredica Hariss Thompson

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