

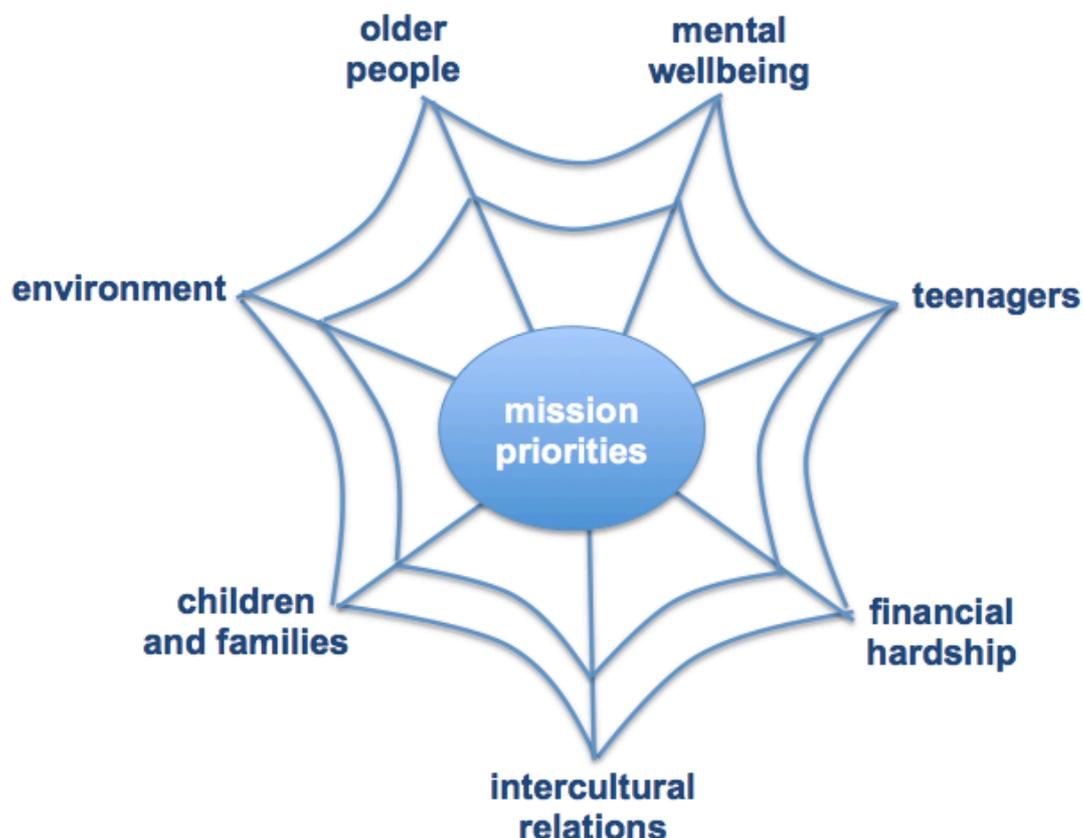


## How could I join in with the mission priorities? June 2018

As a church, we've recently identified 7 different mission priorities that God is calling us to work at over the coming years.

The challenge now is for each individual and group in our church to work out which of these mission priorities God is calling them to support.

***This leaflet is to help you know what's happening in each of the 7 areas at the moment, and what it might look like for you to support one of these areas – to help you decide which mission priority God is calling you towards.***



In each of the 7 areas, we've given some ideas of how these areas may develop in the future. These aren't definite plans – they are hopes that some people have. We've included them as examples, because we know they will help some people picture the future. But if you're the sort of person who can easily picture the future, don't let these ideas limit your ideas or prayers!

The leaflet ends with a couple of questions people have been asking.

# Older people

## Why is this area a priority for us?

- Our local community identified better provision for older people as the top need in our local area
- As people come towards the end of their lives, they can be more spiritually open
- Ministry to older people is an area many of us are already involved with or passionate about



## What do we do in this area already?

- Evergreens and Luncheon Club – monthly events for anyone to come to
- Sunday @3 – a monthly Sunday afternoon church service with traditional hymns and a short talk, followed by tea and cake
- Care homes services – monthly visits to 3 local care homes to chat with residents and give a short service
- These groups now come together under the oversight of an ‘Elderberries’ group
- Individuals volunteer with Communicare, a Christian charity which offers friendship and practical support, mostly to older people
- A daytime cell group for older people
- One member runs an art group, which is mostly for older people

## How might this area develop in the future?

- Sunday @3 is working hard to become more accessible to those with dementia
- Some people would love us to partner with Communicare to expand the Lunch Club
- Some people would like us to run the ‘Omega’ course which helps people consider life and faith as they grow older
- Some cell groups might adopt this as their mission focus
- Esther Clift has recently been made a Chaplain to older people – it will be exciting to see how God opens up new opportunities through this
- Evergreens is shortly going to come to a close – those individuals who want to will carry on meeting in the home of one of the members
- Some people would love us to work with other churches more as we serve the local community

## How could I support this area?

- Through prayer, help shape what our future ministry looks like
- Pray for some older people in our parish by name, and ask them about the challenges they face
- Volunteer with one of the existing activities (eg giving lifts, cooking, admin, chatting with people)
- Join a cell group whose mission focus is older people
- Invite older friends or neighbours to one of the existing activities
- Pray regularly for the activities we run in this area, encouraging the leaders by asking what to pray for
- Visit an older person who lives alone
- 'Adopt' an older person – take them out if they're stuck at home; invite them for family or other social gatherings.

Unexpected benefit: "Hearing about the hidden talents and amazing adventures that people had been on in their younger years"

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## Mental wellbeing

### Why is this area a priority for us?

- This was recognised by all age groups in the community as a significant local need, most notably by under 30s
- Our church discussions in the Autumn identified loneliness as a major problem – and this links strongly to mental wellbeing
- Jesus came to bring life to the full – body, mind and soul. Historically, churches haven't been great at encouraging mental wellbeing, yet a loving community is the ideal place for that to happen



### What do we do in this area already?

- We don't do anything formally in this area, but we do offer pastoral support to people across all age groups who struggle with low mental wellbeing; we also have several mental health professionals in our congregation
- **How might this area develop in the future?**
- A team of people with personal experience or professional expertise in mental wellbeing are beginning to meet to draw up some guidelines for good practice for us as a church

- Some churches run café drop-in sessions as safe spaces where people can talk about their mental health struggles – is that something we should do?
- Some cell groups might adopt this as a mission focus
- As our understanding of what aids mental wellbeing improves, we could link with other mission priority areas (eg financial hardship, teenagers) to offer help and advice
- As our understanding increases, we will also become better at supporting those in our own congregation who struggle with mental wellbeing, or who have family members or friends who do
- This is one of the most undeveloped areas at the moment – it will be exciting to see how this develops as God guides us

### How could I support this area?

- Through prayer, help shape what our future ministry looks like
- Pray for people with low mental wellbeing by name, and seek to understand their difficulties
- Join a cell group whose mission focus is mental wellbeing
- Learn more about mental health conditions and what can help improve mental wellbeing (eg see [www.mindandsoulfoundation.org](http://www.mindandsoulfoundation.org))
- Visit one of the cafes (Romsey or Winchester) and pray about what a similar café could look like in Shirley
- Share with friends and colleagues about your own mental wellbeing, to encourage them to be honest about theirs
- Check in regularly with a friend with low mental wellbeing to encourage them – especially when you don't hear anything back from them

Unexpected benefit: “Learning to live my own life at a slower pace”

## Teenagers

### Why is this area a priority for us?

- Teenagers ask big questions about life – and we want to help them consider Jesus as part of that. Many people who become Christians do so as teenagers
- Our local community identified provision for teenagers as one of the top local needs
- Our church also identified this group as a key group to work with – and if we're investing in children, it makes sense to follow-on by working with teenagers!



"Can you send me a selfie? The only pictures I have of you are ones of you looking at your phone."

## **What do we do in this area already?**

- For years 9-13: youth services ('Live') fortnightly on Sunday evenings and weekly gatherings on Tuesdays ('Connect')
- For years 6-8: fortnightly Sunday morning sessions ('Ignite') and fortnightly gatherings on Wednesdays ('Torch')
- Annual residentials at Westbrook and Soul Survivor, plus partnering with the Ventures holiday at Danehill and beach mission at Minnis Bay
- A prayer group meeting occasionally to pray for Upper Shirley High school
- We fund a youth worker to lead a team working with year 6 to year 13s
- One member of our congregation is a Schools Pastor (a branch of Street Pastors)

## **How might this area develop in the future?**

- Some people would love to see a Christian youth club happening in the local area (maybe run with another church?) which our teenagers could invite their friends to
- Some people would love to see a regular Christian lunchtime club in Upper Shirley High / Regents Park Community College / Taunton's 6<sup>th</sup> form College
- Some people would love to see us partnering with a local school to offer mentoring to struggling teenagers
- We could develop an outreach project in the local community
- Some cell groups might adopt teenagers as their mission focus
- We could run another Youth Alpha course

## **How could I support this area?**

- Through prayer, help shape what our future ministry looks like
- Pray for teenagers in our church by name, and ask them about the challenges they face
- Go along to a youth service to serve hot chocolate\*
- Join one of the teams helping on a Sunday morning or Sunday / Tues / Weds evening\*
- Join a cell group whose mission focus is teenagers
- Volunteer with Schools Pastors\*
- Help take the youth group camping at Soul Survivor in the summer\*
- Pray regularly for the activities we run in this area, encouraging the leaders by asking what to pray for

Unexpected benefit: "A teenager asking me to sponsor them at their baptism"

\* DBS checks may need to be done for these activities, in accordance with our safeguarding policy.

# Financial hardship

## Why is this area a priority for us?

- Official data shows there is significant deprivation within our parish and in surrounding areas which use Shirley High Street
- This is our second greatest existing area of passion and involvement as a church community
- This area fits well with local charities we're also most involved with – SCRATCH and Basics Bank



## ➤ What do we do in this area already?

- We partner with SCRATCH, Basics Bank and SAFE
- The Beacon is a missional community aiming to bring hope to those struggling financially
- The Beacon run regular drop-in meals for those they have contact with
- They also pack hampers to give out at Christmas and Easter
- They also run regular CAP Money Courses to help people manage their personal finances
- Some of our congregation are CAP 'Befrienders' – coming alongside those who are trying to get their personal finances sustainable

## ➤ How might this area develop in the future?

- The Beacon would love to run the drop-in meals more frequently, if they had more helpers
- At some point, we could run an Alpha-style course for some of the people the Beacon have got to know
- We could offer to run money management courses in local schools or colleges
- We could support the Basics Bank in opening a facility available in the evening to serve those who are 'working poor'
- People from this area could partner with the Children and Families mission priority area (and other churches) to run 'Make Lunch' – an initiative that seeks to alleviate holiday hunger in families who rely on free school meals

## ➤ How could I support this area?

- Through prayer, help shape what our future ministry looks like
- Pray for some of the people The Beacon work with by name, and ask them about the challenges they face
- Volunteer at one of the Beacon drop-in meals (we need some cooks!)
- Join The Beacon
- Pray regularly for SCRATCH, Basics Bank or SAFE
- Volunteer regularly for one of those charities or give financially

- Go on a CAP money course, then recommend it to friends or colleagues you think would benefit from it

Unexpected benefit: “Finding common interests and real friendship – and being invited round to watch football at someone’s house”

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## Inter-cultural relations

### Why is this area a priority for us?

- Inter-cultural relations is the second highest concern of under 30s in our local area. A local councillor identified multi-cultural cohesion as a key priority, especially given the rise in hate crimes against Eastern Europeans since the Brexit vote
- Minority ethnic groups in our local area have doubled in size in the last ten years – a trend which is increasing: a third of Southampton school-children are not ‘white British’
- As Christians, we have a message of good news for people from every people group and language



### What do we do in this area already?

- Two cell groups who make a point of welcoming overseas nationals to our area and church
- Some are part of a ‘Mahabba’ group (with other churches) which seeks to understand and befriend local Muslims
- Some link up with Friends International to welcome international students into local homes
- We support CMS as a church, which works in the UK and around the world

### How might this area develop in the future?

- This is one of the most undeveloped areas at the moment – it will be exciting to see how this develops as God guides us
- Some would love to see us host an international carols event at Christmas
- Some would love to see us partner with local schools to help celebrate international events
- We could take a stall in St James’ Park for the annual International festival, helping show that we’re a church for all nationalities and cultures
- Some would love us to run a course to help us understand the culture of our Eastern European neighbours

- We could establish links with local Romanian / Tamil / Nigerian / Polish congregations – we have so much to learn about discipleship from Christians from other cultures
- Some would love to see us run English as an Additional Language class or an informal café for practicing English

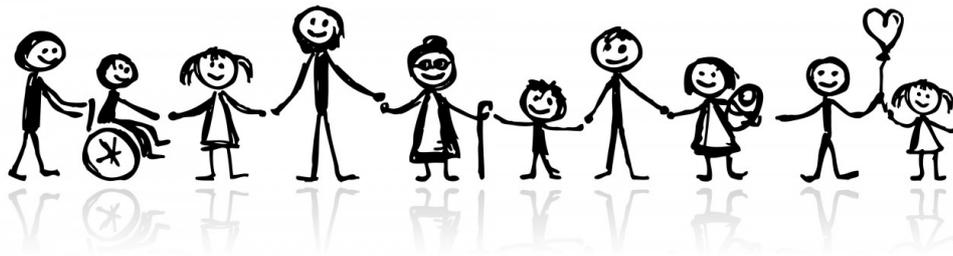
### **How could I support this area?**

- Through prayer, help shape what our future ministry looks like
- Pray for some non-British people you know by name, and ask them about the challenges they face living in this country
- Join a cell group whose mission focus is inter-cultural relations
- Challenge racism when you see or hear it
- Ask Christians from other cultures what they miss most about their ‘home’ culture church
- Make a point of learning how to say ‘hello’ in other languages spoken locally – and practice using them!
- Volunteer to welcome international students into your home through Friends International

Unexpected benefit: “Finding my own walk with Christ deeply enriched by learning from Christians from other cultures”

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## **Children and families**



### **Why is this area a priority for us?**

- The largest age group in our parish is 30-44 year olds (many of whom have children)
- The church survey showed that this is the area of local mission that we are most passionate about and involved with already
- Children are very spiritually curious – but the vast majority do not know let alone understand the basic Christian story. There are many opportunities in schools to demonstrate and explain God’s love
- New parents are often spiritually open, too
- Jesus made a point of welcoming children and blessing them

## **What do we do in this area already?**

- The Ark – a weekly group for toddlers, babies and their parents or carers with coffee and play
- Superstars – a monthly Sunday morning event with breakfast, Bible story, songs, games and craft
- Pray n Play – a group for parents of pre-school children
- Allsorts – a missional community for people who want to reach out to children and families, hosting film afternoons and other events
- schools work – we fund a part time primary schools' worker to be present in 5 local schools, offering pastoral support and doing assemblies and RE lessons
- We host and run Easter Experience for 500 local school children (with input from other churches)
- Junior Church – creating fun, safe environments where children can learn about Jesus on a Sunday morning

## **How might this area develop in the future?**

- This is our busiest mission area already; it may be that we need to do less, but do it more deeply
- We'll draw together leaders from all the different activities to improve the co-ordination and hone the vision between these groups
- Some cell groups might adopt this as their mission focus
- Some would love to see us running parenting courses to help people at different stages of parenting
- Some would like to see us run a regular after-school club for primary-age children
- We could run an Alpha course for people from the Ark and Superstars
- Some would love to see us partner with Safe Families for Children to decrease the number of children who are taken into foster care

## **How could I support this area?**

- Through prayer, help shape what our future ministry looks like
- Pray for some children in our church by name, and ask their parents about the challenges they face
- Volunteer with one of the existing activities (eg setting up, preparing crafts, serving drinks, looking after children, helping in crèche)\*
- Join Allsorts, or a cell group whose mission focus is children and families
- Invite friends or neighbours to one of the existing activities
- Volunteer to help with reading or maths at a local primary school\*
- Pray regularly for the activities we run in this area, encouraging the leaders by asking what to pray for
- Consider fostering or adoption
- Invite a lone-parent family round for a regular meal, or offer to babysit so the parent can go out

Unexpected benefit: "Being invited to a 5 year old's birthday party"

\* DBS checks may need to be done for these activities, in accordance with our safeguarding policy.

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## Environment

### Why is this area a priority for us?

- This was high up on our list of existing topics we're involved with and passionate about as a church
- Many who aren't Christians are increasingly passionate about the environment as well
- This links to our existing mission partners A Rocha and Andrew & Maria Leake



### What do we do in this area already?

- A cell group focusing on the Boney / Green Space alongside the church building – taking a particular interest in developing it as a good environment
- Shirley Litter Pickers – a group going out monthly to pick litter in the local area – with people from outside the church community joining in too
- EcoChurch team – helping us become more environmentally aware as a church community through A Rocha's EcoChurch initiative

### How might this area develop in the future?

- By caring for the environment around us, some would love to see part of the Boney / Green Space or church grounds developed as a natural area to encourage wildlife
- Some more cell groups could develop with an environmental focus
- We could work to ensure sustainable use and recycling become embedded throughout our church activities and buildings
- Some would love to see us join with local secular groups and Christian charities to campaign on environmental issues
- We could seek to understand the impact climate change is having on our link parish in Bupadhengo, Uganda, and see how we could support better environmental stewardship there

### How could I support this area?

- Through prayer, help shape what our future ministry looks like
- Join in with the monthly litter-picking group
- Join a cell group whose mission focus is the environment
- Learn more about climate change and the impact humans have, particularly overseas

- Help increase recycling levels at your workplace by volunteering to take plastics to the Shirley recycling point
- Grow some flowers or vegetables
- Join the Wednesday gardening group in the Park
- Use the updates from Andrew & Maria Leake in Argentina to pray for them regularly
- Pray regularly for the activities we run in this area, encouraging the leaders by asking what to pray for

Unexpected benefit: “Learning to appreciate the different bird songs, and noticing the beautiful flowers I hurry past every day”

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### **What if I don't feel drawn to any of these 7 areas?**

Remember, anybody can join any group: you don't have to have children to support the children and families mission area, or suffer from mental illness to support the mental wellbeing mission area etc.

When seeking God's will, it's always good to pray and reflect on Scripture (eg Proverbs 3.6). Talking with Christian friends can also help.

If the way still isn't becoming clear (which it might not!), maybe consider which of these scenarios pulls on your heart strings most – that might be an indicator of which direction God is calling you in:

- *You hear a colleague at work supposedly 'teasing' an Asian colleague about their accent – but you sense that there's more to it. On quietly asking your Asian colleague, they admit it's not the only racist bullying they receive.*
- *You often hear a neighbour of yours shouting at their children. The children rarely look or sound that happy.*
- *A member of your family is diagnosed with depression. As you try to understand their feelings more, you're appalled when they tell you their boss says they should pull their socks up and get on with their job.*
- *You call round to an elderly neighbour who has taken in a parcel for you. He tells you that his wife died a few years back, and his children and grandchildren all live in Birmingham or the Lake District – he rarely goes out.*
- *You watch some teenagers in a park at the weekend. One seems to be being picked on; another is acting suspiciously and you suspect they're got drugs on them.*
- *You take your re-usable mug to a coffee shop one day, and are disappointed to see no-one else using one. Whilst you're there, you count 23 people buying drinks in disposable cups.*

- *You're picking up some things from a supermarket after work. You hear a mum telling their 3 children "No, we can't afford those this week. We can only buy food that's got a reduced sticker on because it's going off today."*

And if that doesn't help either, then just pick an area and try it out for while! If it doesn't feel right, you can always move to a different area after a few months.

### **What if I feel drawn to more than one of these 7 areas?**

A lot of these areas link to some of the other areas. It will be great if there are (for example) people in the children and families area who are also passionate about the environment, because that will help us make creative links between the two which will help our mission (eg having a family activity around nature or recycling).

Similarly, someone in the teenagers area who's also interested in mental wellbeing can help the teenagers cope with exam stress. Many other examples could be given.

That said, if we spread ourselves too thinly, we won't build deep relationships with those we're trying to minister to. From the outset, we've said that we want to do less, but do it more deeply, because sometimes we're so busy running from one thing to the next that we don't have time to stop and listen to people. So we are encouraging groups and individuals to have one major focus, rather than trying to serve in lots of different areas.

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### **What next?**

We'd love as many people as possible to know which of the 7 areas they're feeling most drawn towards by early July. We will meet with cell and missional community leaders at that stage, and begin liaising about which groups are changing in which ways, so we can be sure to give pastoral support to people through the changes, and establish and support leadership teams in each of the mission priority areas. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to chat with Katy Barnes (pastoral care co-ordinator), Nigel Hughes (local mission coach), Jacqui Dowdell (leadership warden) or Pete Craggs (leadership warden).