

It's time for its MOT



How I used to dread that annual check for the old bangers that I used to try and keep on the road. As the years passed the cars got newer and the dread of the MOT receded. This has now been replaced by visits to the local GP to get my own MOT so to speak.

The point is, though, that regular health checks are useful if not necessary. This applies to an organisation just as much, if not more so, given the complexity of any form of community involving humans. That is why we at Holy Trinity are going to have our health check. .



Beginning in August there will be a series of fortnightly sessions using materials developed by Robert Warren. (do a quick google search on him to check out his credentials) The basis of the sessions will be to reflect on how we at HT are growing towards what are called the Seven Marks of Healthy Church. I have set these out below for your summer reading and prayerful reflection.

The sessions are open to any member of the congregation and it is hoped that, with the Vestry as the core members, a good number of you will take part in this. There will be about eight 2-hour sessions in all. The only prior condition for taking part is that you do so in a spirit of open expectation and are willing to commit to seeing the process through.

Health checks often tell us that we are actually quite fit and healthy. I am sure that this applies to many areas of our life together. They can though point out to us areas of concern where we need to pay more attention to what we are doing and how we do it. I dare that this is also true of us. I do hope and pray that the experience will be an inspiring and invigorating in terms of our individual and corporate faith and mission. I look forward to welcoming you on this next part of our journey together.

On the back of the sheet you will find what are said to be the Marks or characteristics of a Healthy Church.

1. Energised by faith - rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive

- *worship and sacramental life*: moves people to experience God's love
- *motivation*: energy comes from a desire to serve God and one another
- *engaging with Scripture*: in creative ways connect with life
- *nurtures faith in Christ*: helping people to grow in, and share their faith.

2. Outward-looking focus - with a 'whole life' rather than a 'church life' concern

- *deeply rooted in the local community*, working in partnership with other denominations, faiths, secular groups and networks
- *passionate and prophetic* about justice and peace, locally and globally
- *makes connections* between faith and daily living
- *responds* to human need by loving service

3. Seeks to find out what God wants - discerning the Spirit's leading rather than trying to please everyone

- *vocation*: seeks to explore what God wants it to be and do
- *vision*: develops and communicates a shared sense of where it is going
- *mission priorities*: consciously sets both immediate and long-term goals
- *able to call for, and make, sacrifices*, personal and corporate, in bringing about the above .

4. Faces the cost of change and growth

- rather than resisting change and avoiding failure while embracing the past, it dares to take on new ways of doing things
- *takes risks*: and admits when things are not working, and learns from experience
- *responds creatively* to challenges that face the church and community
- *positive experiences* of change: however small, are *affirmed* and built on.

5. Operates as a community

- rather than functioning as a club or religious organization
- *relationships*: are nurtured, often in small groups, so people feel accepted and helped to grow.
- *leadership*: lay and ordained work as a team to develop locally appropriate expressions of all seven marks of a healthy church
- *lay ministry*: the different gifts, experiences and faith journeys of all are valued and given expression in and beyond the life of the church.

6. Makes room for all

- *being inclusive* rather than exclusive.
- *welcome*: works to include newcomers into the life of the church
- *children and young people*: are helped to belong, contribute and be nurtured in their faith
- *enquirers are encouraged* to explore and experience faith in Christ
- *diversities*: different social and ethnic backgrounds, mental and physical abilities, and ages, are seen as a strength.

7. Does a few things and do them well

- *focused* rather than frenetic
- *does the basics well*: especially public worship, pastoral care, stewardship and administration
- *occasional offices*: make sense of life and communicate faith
- *being good news* as a church in its attitudes and ways of working
- *enjoys* what it does and is relaxed about what is not being done