



THE STORY SO FAR ...

1. The starting point ...

It would be an unusual church community that doesn't spend time thinking of ways to reach the people that pass by the often closed doors of their church. So how can we become a church community that goes out to meet people whoever and wherever they are?

2. Imagine ...

Just for a moment imagine ...

... a doorway that is open every day

... a welcome for anyone

... a place that draws people in

... a place for those who need a listening ear and a thoughtful word

... a building which is where the people are

... a place where Christians work and pray together in unity

That place could be St Helen's – St Helen's on the High Street

3. Did you know ... ?

Up to 25000 people walk by St Helen's each day – more than pass by any other church in Worcester; past its usually closed doors and dark windows.

4. A vision for St Helen's ...

... open when people need it

... where people are welcomed

... comfortable

... where people have time to listen

... a haven from a hectic life

... where people find nourishment

... where people can sit, stay and be themselves

... where people can encounter Christ

... a doorway to all churches

... where people find more than they expect

5. But how to achieve this ... ?

A café in St Helen's, open six days a week.

6. Other ways that St Helen's could serve the city centre community ... ?

- ... variety in styles of worship
- ... prayer
- ... Alpha Courses
- ... children's workshops
- ... an information service
- ... Fairtrade produce
- ... an adult and toddler group
- ... a debt counselling service
- ... life skills courses

7. The journey so far ...?

In the late 1990s All Saints' Parish began to think and pray about the future for St Helen's because the County Records Office were due to leave the building in 2005. In practice they left early, so in 2002 the St Helen's Project Group was formed, chaired by the Archdeacon and, at that stage, comprising only members of All Saints'. The hope was to discover how to use St Helen's for mission and ministry as well as generating commercial income.

In April 2004 Christians across Worcester were invited to two Events to pray and reflect on what they sensed may be on God's heart for St Helen's. Some of the responses included the sense of specialness of St Helen's, a place for non-Christians to be there on their terms, where the needs of the whole person could be met, and the need for a place where the unity of the Christian body in Worcester could be demonstrated.

Soon afterwards, the Project Group appointed a Working Party comprising Peter Davies, Georgia Smith and Rose Adams to take the project forward, carry out detailed research and draw up a business plan. However, it was soon realized that for the project to succeed it needed some key, additional practical skills and experience. So, from comprising only members from All Saints', people have now joined the Project Group from St Andrew's Methodist Church, St Paul's Church, The Society of Friends, Top Barn, Old Saint Martin's Church and the Hallow Benefice. Each brings much-needed gifts and experiences of working ecumenically, counselling, building and construction, the hospitality sector, the law, and city centre ministry. Each has responded to a call from God to become involved with St Helen's.

8. The Vision Statement ...

St Helen's on the High Street – Share the Experience

It's open-ended, not prescriptive; it doesn't say who shares the experience – anyone can!

9. St Helen's People ...

Activities at St Helen's will be the responsibility of St Helen's People. But who are they? They will be ...

- ... Christians of any denomination
- ... committed to their home church
- ... able to recognise the opportunities that St Helen's offers
- ... called to help practically and/or financially
- ... praying for discernment of God's will for the St Helen's site
- ... conscientious stewards of the St Helen's site and finances
- ... acting boldly and in faith

10. Aims for St Helen's on the High Street ...

- ... to advance the Kingdom of God in Worcester
- ... to meet people at whatever point they are on their Christian journey
- ... to provide a listening ear
- ... to be a witness of Christians of all denominations and spiritualities working together in unity whilst celebrating their diversity
- ... to create a place of prayer and worship
- ... to provide both place and opportunity for non-Christians to meet God
- ... to excite others so much that they too will want to become involved
- ... to provide opportunities to gift time and talents in the service of Christ
- ... to enable people coming into St Helen's not only to receive but also to give

11. Anxieties ... ?

The Project is designed to be self-sufficient, and to be able to pay salaried staff as well as drawing on the generosity of volunteers. Where will the volunteers come from? By making the Project ecumenical, it is the prayer that very many St Helen's people will be drawn from partner churches.

12. Practical issues ...

A vision without completion would be an empty story but to get to that completion there are many practical matters we need to address.

First of all – communication

People will be better informed than so far through a quarterly newsletter giving information about what is happening and what is planned. The newsletter will be sent to churches, organizations and individuals who have expressed an interest in St Helen's. Nowadays a website is a 'must', so two domain names have been registered. Key to the vision is speaking to potential partners, so a power-point presentation has been produced and has already been shown to St Andrews' Methodist Church Council, the All Saints' morning congregation and Jesus in the City leaders. We hope other requests will come.

Secondly – capital funding

The Project needs a solid business case or it goes nowhere. Therefore, the Project Group has consistently worked to a standard that would be acceptable to the critical eye of an experienced banker or financier. But financing this ambitious Project will be a challenge so the exploration of sources of grants and other funding has already started.

Thirdly – how to achieve a regular income

- ... opening a café for six days a week
- ... exhibitions
- ... concerts and recitals
- ... hiring out the church and schoolroom
- ... donations
- ... other sources of funding
- ... potential partnerships with others

Lastly – the legal structure

The Project Group is investigating how to build a sound legal structure, properly organized, to support everything that enables mission and ministry from St Helen's. Until the final Project and

structure are determined, the All Saints' PCC becomes responsible for St Helen's from December 2005. Whatever the future holds, the Project Group looks for stability and accountability, flexibility and responsiveness to the changing needs of ministry and to protect future contributors from unlimited liability. Professional advice will be taken and charitable status would be considered, and all this in close consultation with the Diocese. The final structure could be through a Company Limited by Guarantee, or a Board of Trustees, or a formal partnership with others, or a Limited Liability Company or a Community Interest Company. All are being investigated for suitability.

13. Will you be involved ... ?

It is hoped that many people will want to become involved. The simplest but most effective way is through prayer – for discernment of God's will for St Helen's and for the successful completion of the Project.

In the future, the possibilities for helping are almost endless but at the moment there are some specific giftings that are needed ...

- ... help with researching funding sources
- ... an organizer for an adult and toddler group
- ... offering and supporting other ideas for mission and ministry
- ... generously supporting events at St Helen's with time and practical help—fun and fellowship are guaranteed!

Even if you don't feel drawn to these specific areas of need, please don't be deterred from coming forward now with any offers of help. We will note the area in which you are particularly interested and how to keep in contact with you. You can telephone 01905 455587 for further information.

14. A dream for St Helen's ...

Dream a dream that within three years, when you enter St Helen's you will ...

- ... see a church full of people of all ages, some eating an early lunch, others waiting for friends or sitting quietly in the prayer space, someone asking for advice, another ordering a Fairtrade coffee, or a helper sitting with someone who simply wants to talk
- ... receive a very warm welcome, but from someone whom perhaps you once thought would never have anything to give
- ... sense overwhelmingly that God has blessed St Helen's and the work done there in His name
- ... hear a gentle buzz of activity, the clink of cups, and know that God is at work in this place.

Let us pray that the Project will come to fruition and we will be able to say ...

St Helen's on the High Street – Share the Experience

St Helen's Project Group Working Party
June 2005