

## Words and Pictures: A reflection on possible futures

Following the last prayer meeting at Ron's house (23/3/10) we have spent three of our life group meetings pondering the future of Long Furlong, the possible next steps and the Word Box items, in the light of 1Cor 14<sup>9</sup> (Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said) and 1Thes 5<sup>19-21</sup> (Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good).

James Ryle in his teaching in "Hippo in the garden" encouraged us to pray, search the scriptures to see if any might resonate with what has been offered as a way of guiding us towards what God might be saying to us. We then discussed possible interpretations and meanings.

We'd like to share with you those things which came out of our time together which may have a bearing on where CCLF goes from here.

### **1. The Word Box (the version of the Word Box in the Appendix is numbered for ease of cross-referencing with the following comments)**

#### Being Salt and Light

There are a number of pictures/ words concerning light (light in the school hall; the torch into the dark pit; the lighthouse) which are about the church on Long Furlong and could refer to CCLF being salt and light to others.

1	<i>"In the school hall, all the lights were out and the room was in darkness. Several people were holding up flaming torches creating small circles of light round them. People turned towards the lights and were drawn towards them. The scene changed to the lights moving out into the estate having the same kind of effect"</i>
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Picture 1: We felt the picture referred to the church and that what was happening was starting firstly with individuals in the church before moving from the people in the church to those outside. So, possibly as far as the future of CCLF is concerned whatever is happening/ about to happen needs to take place in the church first of all and then look and move outwards. Matt 5<sup>14-16</sup>, 2Cor 3<sup>16-18</sup>; Rev 21<sup>23</sup> and 2Cor 4<sup>3-6</sup> spoke to us. Light spoke to us of revealing Jesus living in us – that we need to reflect God's glory and reveal ourselves to others by living a visible life of faith because when we do, others are attracted towards Him.

2	<i>"A large dark pit – throw torch down, it lands and burns and drives back writing snakes – then church members start to climb down the ladder and as each one steps down the light grows brighter and brighter. Ultimately a huge great and beautiful chamber is illuminated, a treasure store with glistening walls and the darkness is dispelled."</i>
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Picture 2: Perhaps this refers to CCLF going out as Jesus' representatives into the world and seeing/ leading people to salvation with the dark pit being transformed into a treasure house e.g. heaven. 2Cor 4<sup>4-7</sup>, Matt 13<sup>44</sup>, Nu 21<sup>6-9</sup> and John 3<sup>13-15</sup> and Lk 10<sup>18-20</sup> spoke to us of the authority Jesus has given us over evil and to open the way to the transformation of the Kingdom, and especially as encouragement to us to remember we are jars of clay containing treasure within which is to be shared with others.

3	<i>"I saw a big boat with a lot of small boats moving away from the big boat. About a week later, I saw a massive lighthouse whose light seemed to be guiding the boats towards it"</i>
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Picture 3: Perhaps this is a picture of us being a resource to the community? A picture of each of us being like Peter in stepping out of the boat even though it is rough weather, being called by Jesus

to be just like Him (Mt 14<sup>29</sup>, Jn 5<sup>20</sup>). Ps 119<sup>105</sup> reminds us that Jesus is the one who lights our way even in stormy/troubled situations/times.

4	<i>"A prayer: Sovereign Lord, we call on the saving name of Jesus Christ to lead us on in the path you have already ordained for us"</i>
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Picture 4: This may be linked to pictures 1-3 – God has a plan and purpose for us, one which He will light the way for us (Ps 119<sup>105</sup>)

#### Do Something!?

5	<i>"What am I afraid of? I see a face. I ... to him last week and wrote his name down but now the paper is at home and I cannot remember. I can't speak to him again. I see a face – to me a stranger but have you been here a long time and I never noticed? I dare not ask. It makes me feel that I have let you down by not noticing you before. I see a face and I know that there is a problem, I might say a ... to encourage. I might pray with you – but ... I start – so I don't. Some of this is easier in a new place."</i>
6	<i>"Start climbing off of the plateau"</i>

Pictures 5 & 6: These two pictures maybe refer to an attitude of reluctance, reticence, maybe a fear even and are impelling/ urging us to do something about this. The plateau image (picture 6) spoke to us of the need to step out, to take a risk(s) – in effect to 'do something'. Similarly, so did picture 5 where the person seems to be saying "I want to step out but I'm holding back" – they just need to push on and do it. Lk 6<sup>46-49</sup> – hear and act on Jesus Words.

7	<i>"Not to be bound to what we have done. Open to possibility it's not our first idea. Acknowledge we don't have the answers."</i>
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Picture 7: An encouragement to move on, not to be constrained by things we know or are familiar with. As it says in Proverbs 3<sup>5</sup> - we are not to rely on our own strength or insight but on God's.

#### Mission and Faith-sharing

There are a couple of pictures/ words with a gardening theme, specifically a theme of propagation (tomatoes falling to the ground – the seeds will grow into new plants; birds eating the cherries – the 'discarded' stones will grow into new trees) which, perhaps coupled with Acts 1<sup>8</sup> (going out in the power of His Spirit), possibly speak of CCLF undertaking mission and faith-sharing.

8	<i>"The tree in the greenhouse is a large tomato plant. It bursts into the sunshine and the tomatoes turn from green to red, drop to the ground and multiply"</i>
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Picture 8: This talks of growing and outgrowing, of ripening and multiplication, of perhaps pain and loss, as the tomatoes grow towards the light (sunshine), ripen, fall to the ground, burst, spill their seed and create new plants. This reminded us of the word spoken over CCLF in its beginning about roots and shoots Is 60<sup>21-22</sup>; plus John 12<sup>24</sup>; Mt 13<sup>31</sup> and Lk 13<sup>19</sup>; which encourage us to seek the growth of the kingdom, even though this will mean some painful times/ experiences (this may even speak into the forthcoming time of change).

9	<i>"There was one cherry tree, then 2 more appeared, then a whole forest. The birds were eating the cherries."</i>
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Picture 9: We didn't find anything directly relevant in scripture but it seems to clearly involve new planting and fruitfulness. The "birds feeding" was reminiscent of the parable of the mustard seed in Mt 13<sup>31</sup>.

#### Welcome and Reaching Out

There are several pictures/ words which refer to our relationships and our care for people (being a trellis; inviting neighbours round for coffee; other churches in Abingdon; being a church family) which may refer to reaching out to people and providing a welcome to people.

10	<i>"Just a sense that God CREATED this church family ... a real sense that it's a living being ... something that, as with all living things – He loves to grow and spread – that would be natural. And the way it spreads would be true to the innate way God created it."</i>
11	<i>"Relationships between Christians in a community seemed like a trellis – creating a framework of support for those who were feeling 'lost'."</i>
12	<i>"Distinctive points of LF: wide age range; community focus; 'low walls' – easy to come in; welcoming; lay people involved. Good place to discover gifts in music and preaching."</i>
13	<i>"God's told me to invite all my neighbours round for coffee!! We'll see what happens. Not sure how that helps with our future vision!!?"</i>

Pictures 10-13 could be linked via this sense of community. Firstly, as an encouragement to continue to grow into Jesus and become his body, linked together with him as the head (Eph 4<sup>15</sup>); to be nurtured and lifted up by him to produce growth (John 15); to spread and multiply like yeast (Mt 13<sup>33</sup>). Secondly, that by being grafted onto the vine (Rom 11<sup>18</sup>) and tied into the trellis of the vineyard (John 15) we provide a structure for supporting those who feel they have no support, who are in need in the community.

Picture 13: This is a mirror of Zech 3<sup>10</sup>! And also reflects the sentiment of the parable of the sower (e.g. Mt 13<sup>1-23</sup>) – be and scatter the good news and see who responds.

## 2. Next Phase

As we prayed, talked and waited on God about the outline you presented for next steps - Resonate and the Family events particularly spoke to members of our group.

In addition, the idea of the cafe at CCNR (Opening the Doors) is a really exciting vision for several of us, especially in terms of welcoming and serving the local community.

Something for '@HomeDads' was thought worth praying about.

With a number of sporting people in the fellowship is there room for something sport-oriented/ reaching out to other sports people?

The fellowship and the estate are no longer families dominated – the proportion of older people is growing and, in general across the population, this will continue to be the case. Should we also be considering something oriented towards this generation?

## 3. Further pictures & words

A picture that didn't make into the summary of the Word Box (but was included in a flier for the prayer meetings) was of a strawberry plant whose runners touched the ground and made more strawberry plants – that where CCLF reaches out God and his people will take root. It was felt that this was along the lines of God saying "I don't care what you do as long as you do something."

We also had a picture of a strong building, a phrase from a song: "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand" and the word 'Dunmore' which is Old English for marshy ground – giving a sense that God is building/ has placed His church on Long Furlong (on the edge of the area of Abingdon known as Dunmore) to be the firm foundation for people and life in this area which otherwise has no firm foundation.

The phrase 'spirit of disruption', which was felt to apply to the area on which LF school stands or the school itself or someone in the school, was coupled with a feeling that there is something not right about the school itself and the way a number of pupils are not enabled to achieve their potential. The need to pray more consistently and steadfastly for the school was voiced, with a sense that this could be a key area of spiritual battle for CCLF. Prayer walking round the school on a Sunday was suggested – with Joshua and Jericho coming to mind ('the walls came tumbling down').

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9<sup>th</sup> May 2010

#### Miscellaneous words from the "Word Box"

"A baby being brought to Dedication. Lifted to God. Physically and in prayer."

"Keep our hands open to receive" Acts 1:8

"Not really a word, but a burden for a long time – the other churches in Abingdon. Often feel some of our talents could be better employed in other churches that are lacking them."

"Working God's healing"