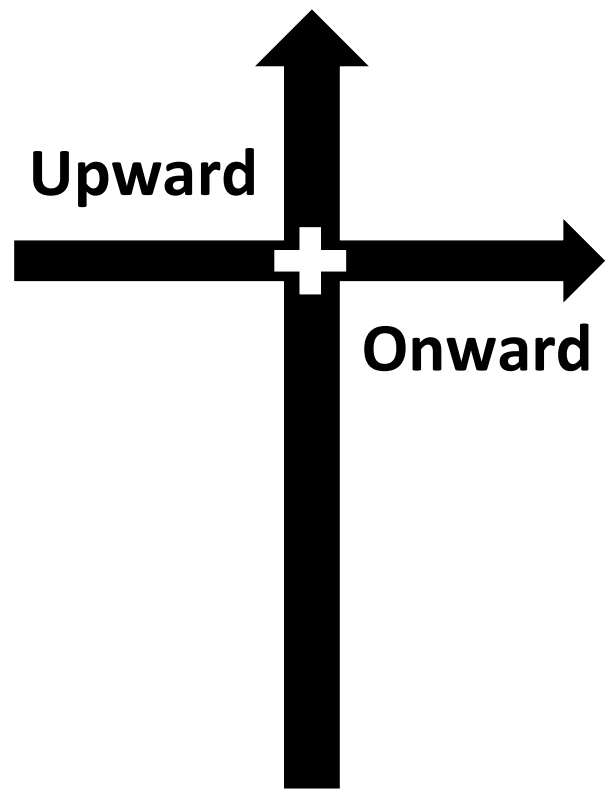


St Christopher's Pott Shrigley



Dear Church Family Member,

It's exciting for me to introduce **'Upward and Onward'**.

For me, UAO had its genesis when we were listening to God and to one another last year: we were trying to discern God's will for our church in regard to our proposed building project. In the end, we concluded that it was not right to proceed, and the project was shelved.

But during that period we spoke a lot about 'Building the Church': something which goes beyond bricks and mortar; something which God wants to do in us, and with us.

Of course, we contribute to that spiritual 'building project' whenever we undertake any act of ministry, service, prayer or worship as part of God's Church at Pott Shrigley. But God Himself is the Master Builder¹, and, if we are to build for the future, we need to discern what His plans are for His church. This is why I believe it is right to spend time listening to Him and to one another this year: I trust that by the end of this period we will have a clearer sense of what our priorities should be, of where our opportunities and challenges are, of where God is leading us and how He wants to build us.

For now, though, I mainly wanted to get something into your hands containing key information, and, especially, in the hope that you put them into your diaries, **significant dates**:

Sunday 23rd February: Preacher at 10.45, Ven. Ian Bishop, Archdeacon of Macclesfield. I believe that Ian's insight, and his knowledge of the wider picture will help us get our bearings, as we set out on this journey together.

¹ Matthew 16.18; 1 Peter 2.5

Sundays in Lent:

A Sermon Series learning from the stories of some of the New Testament churches.

Upward and Onward in...

...EPHESUS: flourishing, or losing its way?	1st March
...CORINTH: good passions, and bad	8th March
...GALATIA: missing the point?	15th March
...THESSALONICA: looking towards the light	5th April

We will learn both positive and negative lessons from their example:
each of these congregations has a specific story, and is planted in a specific place, just like us.

Two **Vision Meetings** for the **whole** Church Family in the Village Hall

1. *Either Saturday, May 16th, 9.30am to 12 noon, or Thursday May 21st, 7.30 to 9.30pm.*
2. *Either Saturday, July 11th, 9.30am to 12 noon, or Thursday July 16th, 7.30 to 9.30pm.*

The **latter part of the year** will be a time to draw together the threads of what we have learned together; including the possibility of a third, Autumn, Church Family meeting if needed.

To help us along the way:

I'm delighted that **Rev Simon Bessant** has agreed to help and advise us in this process. Simon is a parish priest of many years' experience. He has recently 'retired' to Prestbury, where he is a church member: but he works part time for Manchester Diocese as their Head of Mission, Discipleship and Evangelism. Simon has worked with me on planning the outline of our programme, and he will lead our Saturday/Thursday sessions in spring/summer. He will also visit us as a preacher sometime during the year.

For one final thought, I return to our former plans to build a church extension. You may be thinking: 'Hmmm, it's not for me'; 'Sounds like just another talking shop'; 'I've done things like this at work – don't want to do it at church'; 'Surely we *already* know what the church is for and what it should be doing!'; 'I'm too busy/old/young/etc. to take part'... - or myriad similar reactions. Can I ask you to stop for a minute and see it in a different light?

If we had gone ahead with building our church extension, it would have involved us all in a lot of work, and sacrifice – and a smaller number of people in countless hours of effort. And I'm sure we would have done that gladly, believing it was well worthwhile. I would ask you to see UAO in a similar light: we would have been called to put a huge amount of effort into that kind of Building – please can we put some of that instead into the 'Building' which God still wants to do with us at St Christopher's!

Your friend and vicar, David. *February, 2020*