Away Day feedback

We spent some time in prayer together for individuals and ministries in the parish, followed by a time of listening, asking God to speak to us about the way forward. These are some of the themes that emerged as we shared afterwards:

*“Send us the lost and the lonely…” A sense of the need around the church and a prayer for God to give us the love to share with people in need.*

*“Here I am, send me”*

*A picture of sparrows, a large group of ordinary brown birds, but each is known and loved by God. Noticing that within the group from time to time some flitter off and come back.*

*Hosea 3:4-5 – “Afterwards they shall return and seek the Lord…”*

*Reunion – people coming back to St Andrew’s and finding one another again.*

*Looking forward to a day when we need more tables at the 3.45 service.*

*The comfort, warmth and energy of a cup of coffee, especially when shared.*

*A picture of a stony path leading to a fence with a stile, and a signpost pointing two different ways at the stile. Beyond the stile is a green field, with rabbits. Is there something new ahead?*

Please pray over these thoughts and pictures and let Steph know if God reveals something else to you.

In the afternoon, I asked a good friend, Rev Mark Cowling, to lead us in reflecting on the strengths of St Andrew’s and where God may be calling us.

Mark began by asking us who we are at St Andrew’s:

We are Jesus-centred and Spirit-filled. We are a family of all ages and diverse cultures and backgrounds. It is a church where you can be yourself, playing your part in the body, have fun and build relationships. A place of fellowship and friendship. We are welcoming, encouraging, journeying, growing and sending. We are in Radcliffe, a place with a rich heritage and significant needs, with established links with our church school and looser contact with Gorsefield, and a relationship with the New Inn. There are plans to build hundreds of new houses in the parish. We are part of a mission community, which is part of a Deanery within the Diocese of Manchester. We are also part of a network of churches of different denominations in Radcliffe.

We reflected on all that is already happening at St Andrew’s and shared ideas for the future. Mark encouraged us to think in terms of where we would like to be in 5 or 10 years’ time and what would need to happen now to move towards those goals. A number of ideas emerged from our discussion.

1. Prayer – must be the foundation of all we do, giving thanks and listening to God. We could start a monthly church prayer meeting, starting with a day of prayer in September.
2. Building Bible literacy – the Bible Course gives an overview of the big story of the Bible, showing how it all fits together. We will use this for a sermon series in the Autumn, inviting house groups also to run the course, which includes videos we could not show on a Sunday. We could also set up an additional midweek group to follow the course.
3. A “St Andrew’s Reunited” event, to invite people who have not been for a while to come back. This could take place over the weekend of St Andrew’s Day, which falls on Sunday this year. A chippy tea and quiz together on Saturday night, and a special service on Sunday, which is also Advent Sunday – a good time for a fresh start.
4. Celebrating and supporting the existing ministries in our church: youth, StAR, Oasis, men’s group, 3.45 service, Wiggle toddler group. We are starting a new twice-termly meeting of the leaders working with children and young people, to encourage and pray for one another and plan together.
5. A focus on giving and generosity around Harvest, to celebrate the many ministries of this church and provide an opportunity to reflect on how we give back to God for all his goodness, out of the money, talents and time he has given us.
6. Developing ministry amongst working people who cannot get to all the activities that happen in the daytime. One idea is a monthly shared meal, with a theme for discussion and time for prayer.
7. A course for new believers, such as Alpha or Start.
8. Thinking about new ways of reaching and serving the wider community. What do our neighbours need?