

— High Street Methodist Church —



— Harpenden —

Considering Together
Future Options for
Sunday Morning Worship

**A REPORT OF OUR
General Church Meeting
VISION DAY
Saturday 15 March 2014
AFTERNOON SESSION**
prepared by Rev Mark Hammond

*Captain of Israel's host, and Guide
of all who seek the land above,
beneath your shadow we abide,
the cloud of your protecting love;
our strength, your grace; our rule, your word;
our end, the glory of the Lord.*

*By your unerring Spirit led,
we shall not in the desert stray;
we shall not full direction need,
nor miss our providential way;
as far from danger as from fear,
while love, almighty love, is near.*

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

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1. A WORD OF INTRODUCTION

Dear All

On the afternoon of our 2014 **Vision Day** we considered, together, the pattern of our Sunday morning worship at High Street Methodist Church. This was an opportunity for our wider church community to participate in - and give direction to - a process of consultation that began in January when three separate meetings were held for those involved with resourcing our:

- Hall Services
- Junior Church
- Church Services.

As I have said on numerous occasions, I really would have preferred not to be dealing with this matter in year one of my High Street ministry. Instead, I had hoped that this year we would have been focused solely upon the more foundational task of gaining a shared Vision of what it is that God is actually calling us to do and to be as a church. After all, it is this wider Vision that must then shape everything we do – including our worship. Nevertheless, circumstances dictate that this particular discussion cannot wait. As this report clearly sets out, our Hall congregation has now reached full capacity. We need to do something about that sooner rather than later.

I am very mindful that corporate worship is a sensitive issue for some. Discussions about it often lead to arguments over what actually amount to differences in personal preference. Our consultations, thus far, have confirmed that some in our congregation prefer to encounter God in one particular style of worship on offer, and some prefer to encounter God through a whole variety of worship styles. What is true in many other areas is just as true when it comes to worship: All High Street Methodists are not the same! This is a good thing and I believe God would have us cherish this variety rather than quash it by seeking to force conformity.

During the afternoon of Vision Day 2014, our thinking about the pattern of our Sunday morning worship was shaped by the wider Vision that we shared together during the earlier morning session. This provides the perspective we need to keep in mind: God is calling us to be ‘a welcoming, outward-reaching and diverse all-age community’ that is ‘living and growing for the glory of God’. We are not a club run for the benefit of a narrowly defined group of members who are “just like me”. We are a diverse community seeking to ‘encounter God, equip God’s people and extend God’s kingdom’ for the benefit of all.

Fundamentally this means we exist less “for me” and “for us” than we do “for them”. So, as we continue to work towards a solution to our glorious Sunday morning “problem”, I invite you to focus prayerfully not upon what solution will best meet your own particular needs but rather what will best enable us to grow and flourish together as the diverse missional community that God is calling us to be.

Every blessing

Mark Hammond

2. THE MAIN THING – Keeping the big picture in view

*‘And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,
fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.’*

Hebrews 12.1-2

In business management circles it is often said that “the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” Well, the same is just as true when we face the prospect of change within the life of a local church. On the afternoon of Vision Day 2014 those gathered for our General Church Meeting thought together about possible changes to the current pattern of our Sunday morning worship. At the outset we were reminded that the “main thing” was for us to fulfil God’s calling, and so we briefly reviewed the Draft Vision and Strategy statement that had been received with enthusiastic approval in the morning.

The full statement is set out on the following page, but our attention was drawn to the following three parts:

The headline Vision, which describes how we want to see the world around us change through

***lives, relationships and communities in this world
transformed by the love of God in Jesus Christ.***

The basic Strategy, which sets out three ways we intend to share in this work of God by:

***Encountering God;
Equipping God’s people; and
Extending God’s kingdom.***

And the paragraph describing the nature of our church’s corporate identity, which states that:

***Corporately
we believe God has called us
to be a welcoming, outward-reaching and diverse all-age community
living and growing for the glory of God
by making, nurturing, equipping and sending
disciples of Jesus Christ
who are continually being
filled, transformed, led and empowered by God’s Spirit
to actively share in God’s mission of love to the world
as ambassadors of Christ.***

We were also reminded of how those present on the morning of our Vision Day had reviewed the make-up of our church population and agreed with the following conclusions: ***That we would like more:***

- ***Members of all ages***
- ***Worshippers of all ages
and proportionally more:***
- ***Children and teenagers***
- ***Men***
- ***Young adults*** (by which we mean under-sixties!).

High Street Methodist Church Draft Vision & Strategy

As part of the Methodist “discipleship movement shaped for mission”

OUR VISION is:

Lives, relationships and communities in this world transformed by the love of God in Jesus Christ

OUR STRATEGY for sharing in this work of God is to:

**Encounter God;
Equip God’s people;
Extend God’s Kingdom.**

To this end,
alongside our fellow Christians
Christ calls us to know Him and to make Him known.

Therefore,
when gathered together corporately
or dispersed as individuals,
we at all times and in all places
by the grace of God
seek to be the salt and light of the world:
Filled with the Spirit of God;
Following the Son of God;
All for the glory of God.

Corporately
we believe God has called us
to be a welcoming, outward-reaching and diverse all-age community
living and growing for the glory of God
by making, nurturing, equipping and sending
disciples of Jesus Christ
who are continually being
filled, transformed, led and empowered by God’s Spirit
to actively share in God’s mission of love to the world
as ambassadors of Christ.

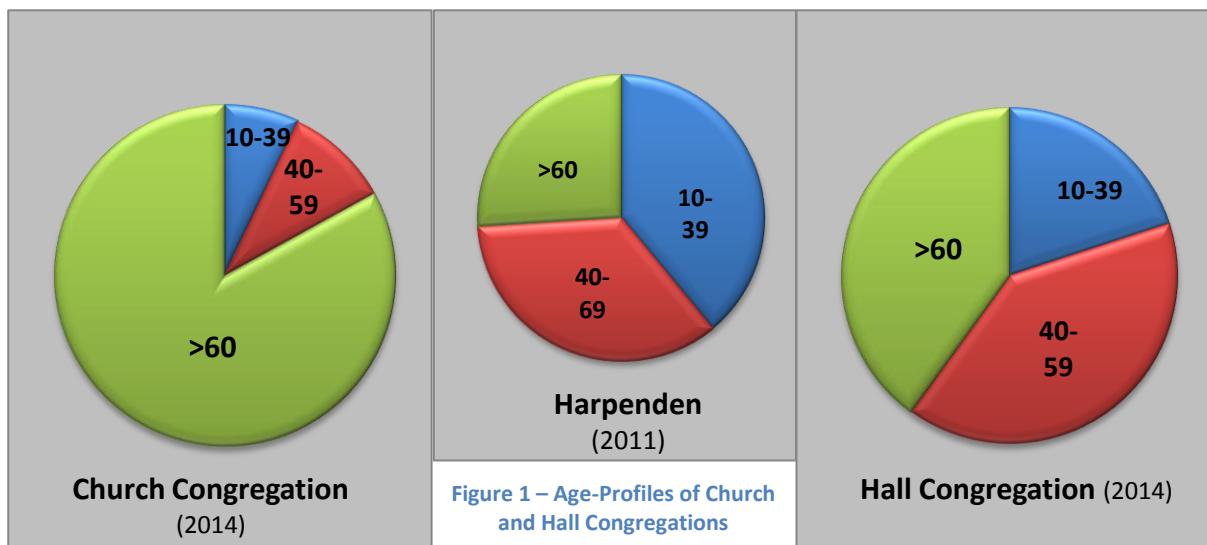
Individually
we believe God calls us each to seek God’s grace:
to grow in our love for God and for our neighbour;
to grow in the likeness of Christ our Saviour;
to be diligent in helping those who are in any need;
to be disciplined in personal prayer, Bible study and worship; and
through the joyful offering of ourselves, our time and our money
to play our full part as members of Christ’s body: The Church.

3. THE HIGH STREET CENSUS – Our Congregational Facts

In order to gain a more comprehensive picture of those who worship at High Street, we conducted a census of both Church and Hall congregations one Sunday morning in March 2014.

a. Age-Profiles: Church and Hall Congregations

The age-profiles of our two main Sunday morning congregations are clearly quite different from each other, but this is not a clear-cut division of the generations. The fact is that all generations are present within both our Church and Hall congregations. This means we have worshippers in their twenties who are choosing to worship in the choral style of the Church, and we have worshippers in their nineties who are choosing to worship in the more contemporary style of the Hall.



Nevertheless, our congregational census confirms what many other churches are finding to be the case, namely that: Those who nowadays would prefer to worship in a traditional choral style are mainly over sixty, whereas those who would prefer to worship in a more contemporary style are more evenly spread across the age groups. Significantly at High Street, where about two-thirds of our over-60s worship in the Church, about four-fifths of our 40-59 year olds and around three-quarters of our under 40s worship in the Hall.

To be quite clear, **these figures do not mean** that we should be removing our choral style of worship! Our Church congregation continues to provide the staple-worship-diet for around half of those who worship at High Street. We have every reason to believe that in years to come it will go on catering for the worshipping needs of many, including some of those who are yet to join High Street Methodist Church. If we are truly seeking to be *'a welcoming, outward-reaching and diverse all-age community living and growing for the glory of God'* then we will want to ensure that our provision for those choosing our Church congregation is as good as it can be.

What **these figures suggest** is that, if we are serious about all-age growth and intent on having proportionally more younger-worshippers, it is of great strategic

importance for us to enable our Hall congregation to grow as large as it is possible. The future strength and vitality of this church depends upon our making many more younger members, and the facts show that most of these newcomers will choose to worship God in a contemporary style.

b. Junior Church: Where do the Parents Worship?

On the morning of our congregational census 25 parents of Junior Church children worshipped in the Church compared to 33 in the Hall. This relatively even split suggests that, whatever changes are made in the pattern of our Sunday mornings, Junior Church provision will be required for both congregations.

During their consultation in January 2014, those currently responsible for running our Junior Church provision began to explore some creative new ways of developing their work in order to grow the capacity of our Junior Church to enable them both to cater for greater numbers of children and, if necessary, to operate over a longer time each Sunday morning.

c. Parallel Growth: Church and Hall Congregations

Our current “parallel” pattern of Sunday morning worship began in 2006, when the Hall service was introduced.

We can see from the official October count figures that our total combined attendance grew from 166 adult worshippers in 2006 to 203 in 2013.

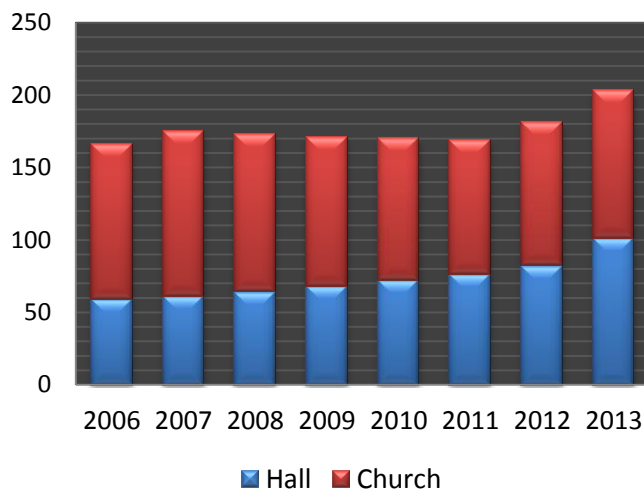


Figure 2 - HSMC Average Adult Attendance at Parallel Services

As these figures are historically collected during a month containing a school holiday they tend to give us a slightly depressed picture, but nevertheless it is significant that

they show that our adult attendance at worship has been clearly increasing at a time when many other churches have experienced falling numbers.

The figures for each individual congregation show how, over the past eight years, the proportion of adult worshippers has steadily shifted from the Church to the Hall. So where back in 2006 the split was 64 per cent Church and 36 per cent Hall, in 2013 it was 50/50.

The changing proportions do not, however, mean that the Church is shrinking as the Hall grows. Indeed, for the past three years both Church and Hall have seen a growth in the average size of their October congregations. Nevertheless, where the Church congregation has recently seen some modest growth, the Hall congregation has grown consistently every passing year of its existence.

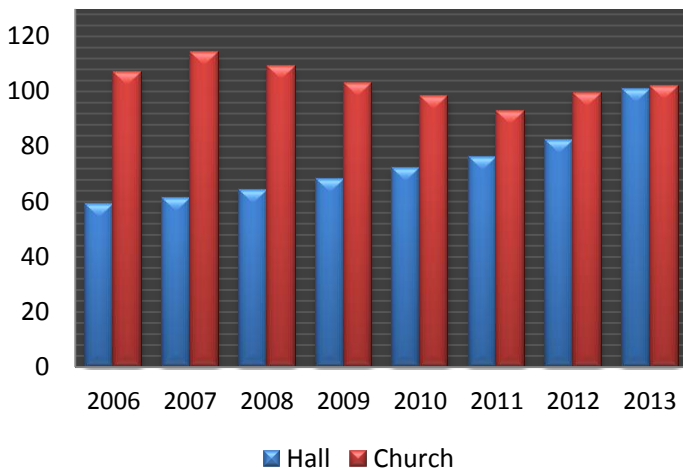


Figure 3 - HSMC Average Adult Attendance at Parallel Services

So for both our congregations, the October count figures are very positive. Firstly, they show that our Church congregation has over the past eight years maintained its strength at around 100 adults attending each week (107 in 2006, 102 in 2013). Secondly, they show that over the same eight year period our Hall congregation has seen a wonderful level of growth in adult attendance from 59 in 2006 to 101 in 2013.

This past October count was particularly significant because it marked the point at which our Hall congregation reached the same size as our Church congregation. Indeed, over the period from 15 September to 9 March we operated parallel services on sixteen Sundays, the average adult attendance was 97 in the Church and 104 in the Hall. On ten of these sixteen occasions the Hall had the larger congregation, but the figures for both congregations fluctuated quite markedly from week-to-week, with the Church congregation ranging from 69 to 146, and the Hall congregation ranging from 71 to 129.

The main cause of this current consultation is that our Hall congregation has now out-grown our Hall. Indeed, there have been occasions when a number of people have had to stand because we have had insufficient seating. We are looking for where we might make room for a few more seats here and there, but if we are keen to keep growing then a more permanent solution is required. Indeed, many church growth experts would say that we are well past the point at which more spare capacity is required because we have long been breaking the so-called “80 per cent rule” which states: *When average annual worship attendance reaches 80 per cent of the comfortable seating capacity of the worship room, crowding becomes a serious growth-limiting factor.*

d. Junior Church: Long Term Concern and Recent Cause for Hope

Whilst our October figures show how we have recently seen some growth in our adult congregations, over the same period they show how attendance in our Junior Church has declined from an average of 78 in 2002 to 44 in 2013. And this is a far cry from the hundreds we were catering for just a couple of decades ago.

Even so, there is much recent cause for hope as many of our Junior Church groups are reporting an increase in attendance. Our work among the youth appears to be gaining in strength and momentum.

Arguably the move to parallel services in 2006, which seems to have been a key factor in raising adult attendance, had a rather negative impact on the way Junior Church could operate because it resulted in the Hall space being unavailable to

them. During Sunday morning worship there is no single large space available within which all our children might gather together. They are necessarily required to remain only in small groups.

When our Junior Church team were consulted in January 2014, they began to explore what new ways of working might enable them both to make better use of their current resources and to create an even more vibrant, energetic and attractive experience for the young people. Some of the most exciting possibilities involve the children having their own separate time of gathering for worship and other activities, where they could feel part of something far larger than just their relatively small age-specific groups, and have time and space to develop together a single Junior Church identity. The most obvious way to enable this would be for us to free up the Hall, which is already kitted out with the audio-visual systems that the gathered Junior Church would need.

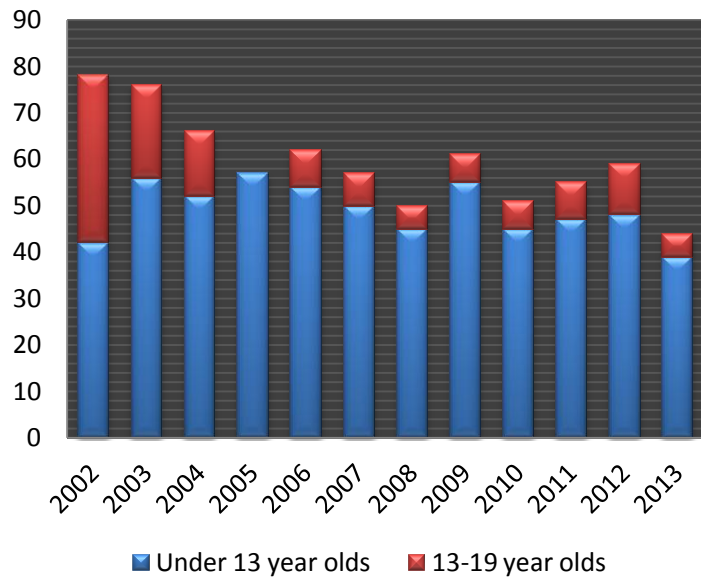
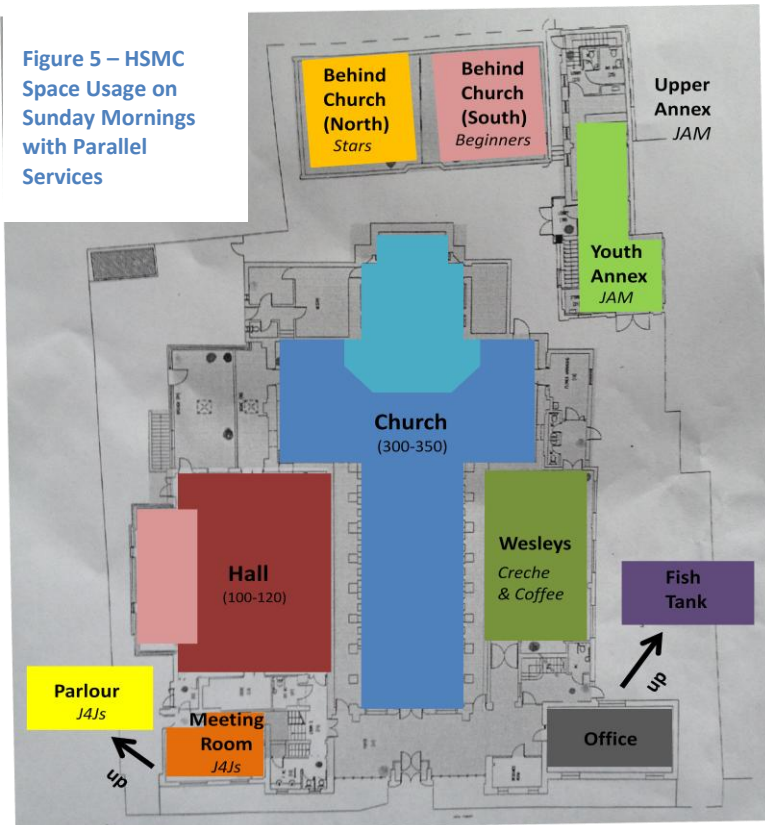


Figure 4 - HSMC Junior Church Attendance 2002-2013

e. Our Use of Space on Sunday Mornings

Figure 5 – HSMC Space Usage on Sunday Mornings with Parallel Services



On Sunday mornings when we have parallel services almost every room in our premises is being used.

Our main space is the Church, which has the capacity to hold about 350 people. This is currently occupied by a congregation averaging around one hundred.

Meanwhile, our Hall which holds about 120 is often at or even over full capacity, with a congregation which is growing rapidly with all ages.

Our outlying smaller spaces are occupied by our various Junior Church groups. The golden questions for us

are: Do we want our Junior Church and two main congregations to continue thriving and growing? And, if so, how best can we rearrange our use of space on Sunday mornings to create the room for all our work to expand?

4. SHAPING A SHARED VISION FOR DIVERSE WORSHIP

Those who gathered for our Vision Day were each asked to consider the following ten questions that may help us to discern the way forward. Each person present was invited to answer each question with a “yes”, “no” or “undecided”. In what follows the basic response to each question is contained in the boxes. A fuller analysis of all the responses (including comments) is provided in Appendix 1.

1. Do we want to cherish, equally, our two distinct styles of Sunday morning worship?

Our shared experience at High Street matches that of other churches who have found that many people find it easiest to encounter God within a traditional, choral style of worship, whilst others find it easiest to encounter God within a more contemporary style of worship. There are, of course, those among us who genuinely appear to have no preference and find they can encounter God equally well in either style of worship. But, for a significant number of people one or other of the parallel styles we currently offer provides the “staple-diet” of worship. So if we are serious about continuing to attract and provide for a diverse church it would seem essential that we go on cherishing, equally, our two distinct styles of worship.

Do we want to cherish, equally, our two distinct styles of Sunday morning worship?	
Yes	97
No	0
Undecided	1

2. Do we want to provide the two styles of service every Sunday morning?

There is good evidence to suggest that when we chop and change the “staple-diet” styles of our Sunday morning services we may well be hindering the growth of our two parallel congregations. This is in line with the experience of other churches who have found that attendance at worship increases most where there is a settled weekly consistency of provision. There are a couple of plausible theories suggesting why this may be the case:

- Firstly, we human beings are creatures of habit and tend to favour a weekly routine. If a particular worshipper finds it easiest to encounter God within a particular style of worship then it is very helpful for them to know that that particular style of worship is available to them every week at the same place and time.

- Secondly, if I am inviting someone along to worship for the first time, then it helps me to know, for sure, that if I invite them to come along any week at a certain time and in a certain place then I can be confident that they will receive the particular experience I envisage they will get.

Our current pattern is that once a month we replace our parallel services with a single “Worship Together” service. On the face of it our Worship Together services attract our largest single congregation, but the reality is that on those particular weeks our average adult attendance is consistently 25 per cent lower than when we have parallel services. Our consultations in January revealed that this was not just because some people will not come unless we are offering the particular style of worship they find helpful, but also because some of our young families actually find these services rather stressful and positively unhelpful.

It is clear from the good attendance at them, that many people do enjoy our “all-age” Worship Together services, but perhaps we should provide them at another time so that they do not interrupt the provision of the staple-diet many crave.

Some of us think that we should mix choral and contemporary styles within the one service, but those churches that have experimented with this have generally found that in doing so they simply dissatisfied a proportion of those who wanted one style or the other. Famously, when the Church of England introduced their Alternative Service Book, one London vicar saw this as a great opportunity to combine the weekly 1662 Prayer Book Service with the band-led contemporary service. Those who wanted a Book of Common Prayer Service knew this new liturgy was not one and they complained, and those who didn’t want a Prayer Book Service thought this was one and complained. That particular church subsequently saw its attendance at worship grow substantially but only because it honoured the different needs of its two sets of worshippers by establishing a regular, weekly, two-service pattern.

This is not to say that we shouldn’t occasionally bring everyone together for a big celebration at which we ask everyone to be especially gracious to one-another as we “mix-it-up”. Those special occasions should, perhaps, be exceptional. Wherever possible they should be arranged so as not to interrupt the weekly separate-style provision which will best provide the regular staple-diet which will ensure we are each week feeding the greatest number and variety of worshippers.

Do we want to provide the two styles of service every Sunday morning?	
Yes	90
No	3
Undecided	7

3. Do we want each congregation to have ample room to grow?

As we have seen, our traditional congregation is no-longer the largest at High Street but it has in recent years shown signs of growth. What is more, it has

sufficient space to grow three-fold within the Church where it currently meets. We have also seen how our contemporary congregation has grown consistently year-on-year and is now more-often-than-not the larger of the two services. This congregation clearly has great potential for further growth, but it has now outgrown the Hall.

Do we want each congregation to have ample room to grow?	
Yes	97
No	1
Undecided	1

4. Do we want everyone to have the opportunity to join both congregations every week?

A few of those who shared in the consultations in January strongly expressed the view that our unity-with-diversity at High Street is best expressed through our pattern of parallel services. There are, however, two basic approaches to unity and diversity where you have two different services on offer:

- Our current “parallel model” is the first, and may be summarized like this: *To express our unity we want to worship **at the same time** in different places and styles, each person each week making a choice between congregations.*
- But there is an alternative “sequential model”, which may be summarized like this: *To express our unity we want to worship **in the same place** at different times and styles, each person each week able to join both congregations.*

The parallel model that we have operated at High Street for more than six years is the one with which we are familiar. Those families within which some prefer one style and some the other, find it particularly helpful that both services happen at the same time. But the reality is that the parallel model does force worshippers to make a definite choice week-by-week. Those who may want to support both styles of worship on the same Sunday cannot because they always clash, and those - such as the choir or the band - who share responsibility every week for leading a particular style never get the chance to support or even experience the alternative.

The parallel model has further complications in terms of preaching resources and strategy. With regards to strategy, where our own Presbyterian Minister has a sermon for the whole church he currently cannot preach it to the whole church on the same Sunday. With regard to preaching resources, when making the Circuit Plan the Superintendent currently has to treat High Street not as one but as two separate churches and each week supply two preachers rather than one. Were the Circuit well-stocked with preachers this would be acceptable, but the number of available preachers has become so critically low that the Circuit Plan is now proving very hard to populate. As a consequence each church is increasingly given at least one “Local Arrangement” service per quarter – which

is a service where no preacher is planned and the responsibility for worship is given instead to the Church Stewards.

Those churches that have adopted the sequential model have found that everyone is enabled - if they so wished - to support and experience both styles of worship every week. Indeed, where this happens a small group of two-service-regulars often forms who then create a human-bridge between the two congregations. What is more, even those responsible for making one style happen always have the opportunity to support the other. And knowing that everyone is getting fed with their favoured style every week means that the alternative can be experienced not as a replacement but simply an additional worship experience.

Do we want everyone to have the opportunity to join both congregations every week?	
Yes	56
No	15
Undecided	28

5. Do we want ample opportunity for both congregations to share together in coffee fellowship either before or after worship?

Our recent Congregational Census revealed that the majority of our Hall congregation and a minority from the Church appreciate the post-worship coffee in Wesleys. If this is an area of fellowship that we think is important, then as our congregations grow we will need to consider how we might increase our capacity for more people to share in it.

Do we want ample opportunity for both congregations to share together in coffee fellowship either before or after worship?	
Yes	76
No	4
Undecided	18

6. Do we want our Presbyteral Minister to be able to preach to both congregations on the same Sunday morning?

As mentioned above, where our own Presbyteral Minister has a sermon for the whole church he currently cannot preach it to the whole church on the same Sunday. In effect, it is taking him at least twice as long to get the message to us all, or –more commonly – each congregation is only getting half of the messages that are addressed for them.

Do we want our Presbyteral Minister to be able to preach to both congregations on the same Sunday morning?	
Yes	64
No	17
Undecided	19

7. Would we like both congregations to see our Presbyteral Minister more?

Like question 6, fundamentally this is a question about strategic church leadership. The relationship between a Presbyteral Minister and the church for which he, or she, has pastoral and missional charge varies enormously according to the size of the church in question. Research shows that in a small “family-sized” church with up to 50 worshippers that relationship is such that seeing the minister week-by-week is not particularly critical. But once a church has more than 100 worshippers a more regular contact between the Minister and the congregation becomes very critical for growth and strategic leadership. This is not a matter of the Minister preaching at every service, but the Minister being present as much as possible when the main congregation meets.

High Street has over 200 worshippers and yet each of our parallel congregations generally sees our Presbyteral Minister just once a month. This is the same as one would expect for a family size congregation in a rural setting where the Minister has pastoral and missional charge of three or more small village churches. It is substantially less than ideal for the strategic leadership of a church on the scale of High Street Methodist Church.

Would we like both congregations to see our Presbyteral Minister more?	
Yes	80
No	7
Undecided	13

8. Would we like to make the Hall available to our Junior Church every Sunday morning?

As already mentioned, when consulted in January our Junior Church team began to think how they could develop their work in exciting new ways if the Hall became available to them on a Sunday morning.

Would we like to make the Hall available to our Junior Church every Sunday morning?	
Yes	57
No	13
Undecided	29

9. Do we want our weekly Sunday morning worship to attract and keep all ages, and proportionally more children and young adults and men?

This question simply verifies that we really do share this part of what flowed from our discussion of vision and strategy on the morning of Vision Day.

Do we want our weekly Sunday morning worship to attract and keep all ages, and proportionally more children and young adults and men?	
Yes	94
No	1
Undecided	5

10. Do we want our Church space to be a fit venue for all our services – both traditional and contemporary?

This question relates to our main Church space where our traditional choral worship takes place. This question gave those present on Vision Day to indicate whether or not this space should be rendered ideal not only for our traditional choral worship but also for our contemporary style worship. The detail of how this might be implemented was not the issue here, only the principle of whether this was something we felt was important to do.

Do we want our Church space to be a fit venue for all our services – both traditional and contemporary?

Yes	76
No	10
Undecided	13

5. HIGH STREET 2034: The Church you hope to be here in 20 years

Those gathered for our General Church Meeting were asked in their groups to:
Describe the High Street Methodist Church you hope will be here in 20 years time.

The responses “dreaming-dreams” of High Street 2034 have been collated and the complete responses are listed in Appendix 2. Beyond painting an overall picture of a vibrant all-age church, they express hopes that cover the following areas of church life:

- Worship
- Mission and outreach
- Expressing and sharing faith
- Our church building
- Technology
- Youth work
- Junior Church
- Workers
- Small groups
- Training and equipping
- Wesleys
- People groups
- Governance
- Local schools and uniformed organisations
- and more.

6. OPTIONS FOR SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP AT HIGH STREET

During the three consultation meetings held in January 2014, many of those who have responsibility for our current parallel services were presented with the issues regarding Sunday mornings at High Street that have already been detailed. There was general agreement that the current overcrowding of our Hall congregation means we cannot continue as we are without doing damage to the ongoing all-age growth of High Street Methodist Church. An alternative way of operating on a Sunday morning is required. Those sharing in the January consultations were asked to consider what sensible options may be open to us as we seek to find the best solution. Between them they came up with variations on the following nine basic options:

1. One service every week with a blended style

This option would mean abandoning our two separate services with their distinct styles in favour of a single service with a mix of styles every Sunday morning. The Hall would then be *available* for our Junior Church.

2. Different styles on alternate weeks

This option would mean no-longer seeking to provide both styles every week, but each style being offered only on alternate Sunday mornings. The Hall would then be *available* for our Junior Church.

3. Two sequential services in the Hall and leave the Church as it is

This option would leave our traditional choral style worship completely untouched but double the number of contemporary style services in the Hall every Sunday morning. The Hall would remain *unavailable* for our Junior Church.

4. Swap the service venues around

This option suggests that as our contemporary congregation is now more-often-than-not larger than our traditional congregation, they should swap venues so that the contemporary congregation has the room it needs to continue expanding. The Hall would remain *unavailable* for our Junior Church.

5. Add a third parallel service in Wesleys

This option would provide a third service in Wesleys perhaps of another style altogether, such as Cafe Worship. The Hall would remain *unavailable* for our Junior Church.

6. Reconfigure or extend the Hall

This option would provide the Hall congregation with more room by making the Hall space larger by altering the building in some way. The Hall would remain *unavailable* for our Junior Church.

7. Consecutive services of different styles in the Church

This option involves continuing to providing our two separate and distinct styles of worship every Sunday morning, but both happening in the Church at different times – an earlier service of one style, a later service of another, with coffee served in between. The Hall would then be *available* for our Junior Church.

8. Find an alternative venue for the Hall service

This option would involve finding a larger off-site venue to give our Hall congregation room to expand. The Hall would then be *available* for any Junior Church that remained on our High Street site.

9. Have one style on Sundays, another midweek

This option involves moving one of our current Sunday morning services to a midweek slot. The assumption being that both styles would happen in the Church so they each had the same room for expansion. The Hall would then be *available* for our Junior Church.

Those present on our Vision Day were invited to consider which of these nine options would best fulfil our Vision and Strategy as outlined in the morning. By way of introduction to this consideration, a summary was shared of the responses that had been given to the ten questions outlined above.

Each individual present was invited to make their own assessment of the nine options as outlined in the following box.

Those present on Vision Day were invited to indicate what they considered to be their top three options: giving 3 points to their top option; 2 points to their second; and 1 point to their third option. The full collated responses are listed in Appendix 3.

89 people took part in this exercise and the following summary ranks the nine options by first preference:

	First Preference	Second Preference	Third Preference	Total Top-Three Preferences	Total Points
Option 7	49	10	6	65	173
Option 3	17	14	14	45	93
Option 6	7	19	8	34	67
Option 1	7	4	10	21	39
Option 5	4	11	12	27	46
Option 4	3	11	6	20	37
Option 2	2	3	5	10	17
Option 8	0	4	6	10	14
Option 9	0	3	2	5	10

7. SUMMARY CONCLUSION

From the output of Vision Day this year's General Church Meeting has given to us a clear direction for our further consideration of Sunday mornings at High Street, and has also highlighted some areas where we need to address certain sensitivities.

The assessment of the nine options is striking. Only the top three options received preference votes from more than a third of those present who took part in this exercise:

1. **Consecutive services of different styles in the Church** (Option 7)

This option achieved the highest number of first preferences and was a top-three option for 65 of the 89 who took part in this exercise. Nevertheless, the fact that 24 people did not favour this option suggests there are some significant doubts and fears regarding it. It would therefore be wise for these to be highlighted so that they may be fully addressed within any consideration of how this option may best be implemented.

2. **Two sequential services in the Hall and leave the Church as it is** (Option 3)

15 of the 17 people who put this option as a first preference did not put Option 7 in their top three preferences. This option is, therefore, viewed by a significant minority as appreciably preferable to Option 7.

3. **Reconfigure or extend the Hall** (Option 6).

34 of the 89 (over one third) who took part in this exercise included this as one of their favoured three options.

70 per cent of those who took part in this exercise did not include in their top three preferences any of the remaining six options.

That these three options have emerged as our top preferences seems to confirm the shared vision for diverse worship as indicated by the earlier responses to the ten questions.

These three options reinforce the collective view of those who gathered on the afternoon of our General Church Meeting Vision Day that at High Street Methodist Church:

- ***We do strongly want to cherish, equally, our two distinct styles of Sunday morning worship*** [97 yes, 0 no, 1 undecided]
- ***We do strongly want each congregation to have ample room to grow*** [97 yes, 1 no, 1 undecided]
- ***We do strongly want our weekly Sunday morning worship to attract and keep all ages, and proportionally more children and young adults and men*** [94 yes, 1 no, 5 undecided]
- ***We do strongly want to provide the two styles of service every Sunday morning*** [90 yes, 3 no, 7 undecided].

It is also perfectly in line with our responses to the ten questions that a significant minority do not favour moving to a model of “consecutive services of different styles in the Church” but would prefer a solution that does not involve any change that would affect our traditional Sunday morning congregation. To a varying degree:

- ***The majority*** [80 yes], ***but not all*** [7 no, 13 undecided], ***are convinced that we would like both congregations to see our Presbyteral Minister more***
- ***The majority*** [76 yes], ***but not all*** [4 no, 18 undecided], ***are convinced that we want ample opportunity for both congregations to share together in coffee fellowship either before or after worship***
- ***The majority*** [76 yes], ***but not all*** [10 no, 13 undecided], ***are convinced that we do want our Church space to be a fit venue for all our services – both traditional and contemporary***
- ***The majority*** [64 yes], ***but not all*** [17 no, 19 undecided], ***are convinced that we do want our Presbyteral Minister to be able to preach to both congregations on the same Sunday morning***
- ***The majority*** [57 yes], ***but not all*** [13 no, 29 undecided], ***are convinced that we would like to make the Hall available to our Junior Church every Sunday morning***

- ***The majority*** [56 yes], ***but not all*** [15 no, 28 undecided], ***are convinced that we do want everyone to have the opportunity to join both congregations every week.***

It seems right that, as we recognise how the General Church Meeting has discerned a very clear direction and preferred option, they have also indicated quite clearly where our sensitivities lie that will help to shape the ongoing consultation and any subsequent implementation.

Appendix 1 – Responses to the Ten Questions

A - Overview of all responses

In total 100 forms were completed and the following is a summary:

Question	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
1 Cherish Equally	97	0	1	98
2 Two Styles	90	3	7	100
3 Room to Grow	97	1	1	99
4 Join Both	56	15	28	99
5 Coffee	76	4	18	98
6 Minister Preach at Both	64	17	19	100
7 See more Minister	80	7	13	100
8 Hall to JC	57	13	29	99
9 Attract and Keep	94	1	5	100
10 Church Venue	76	10	13	99
Total	787	71	134	992

B – Some further analysis

Main findings are:

- Overall **79 per cent** of responses were **positive**
- Overall **7 per cent** of responses were **negative**
- Overall **14 per cent** of responses were **undecided**

Questions with most Undecided responses:

- **Q8: Would we like to make the Hall available to our Junior Church every Sunday morning?**
29 per cent undecided
- **Q4: Do we want everyone to have the opportunity to join both congregations every week?**
28 per cent undecided
- **Q6: Do we want our Minister to be able to preach to both congregations on the same Sunday morning?**
19 per cent undecided
- **Q5: Do we want ample opportunity for both congregations to share together in coffee fellowship either before or after worship?**
18 per cent undecided.

Questions with most Negative responses:

- **Q6: Do we want our Minister to be able to preach to both congregations on the same Sunday morning?**
17 per cent negative
- **Q4: Do we want everyone to have the opportunity to join both congregations every week?**
15 per cent negative
- **Q8: Would we like to make the Hall available to our Junior Church every Sunday morning?**
13 per cent negative
- **Q10: Do we want our Church space to be a fit venue for all our services – both traditional and contemporary?**
10 per cent negative.

Appendix 2 - 2034: The Church you hope will be here in 20 years

Regarding the whole church

- 2034 Led by God
- A vibrant gospel-preaching, Bible-teaching church, with a large Junior Church.
- Bursting at the seams with people of all ages
- The church will be relevant to that time (2034)
- 500 to 1,000 “members”, worshippers
- Refuelling hub – gathering of disciples to equip them for work outside
- Demonstrably breaking down denominational boundaries
- Hub working to a network
- Where **all** of my neighbours can go
- Church more active in wider community
 - The “Noise” in community
 - Leads to a community-based church rather than building-based
- Everyone’s contribution to church life being and feeling equally valued
- Bible-based praying, believing church
- Cutting-edge, pioneering ministry
- Lots of groups of people loving Jesus and gathering and being sent out to live for Him
- Reflect the diversity and demographics of Harpenden, all walks of life
- Many people who have been sent out would look back growing up at High Street and reflect back on the faith and values they learnt here and want to live for Jesus where they are called
- Sense of multi-generational family Christian community
- Many people who began to follow Christ in the last 20 years
- Many missionaries who are being sent out and supported by High Street
- Full of vibrant Christians whose lives have been transformed
- A Church servicing the community – having real impact on the community – not marginalized
- More ecumenical – maybe not a separate Methodist church
- We pray that the churches will be much more fully aware what GOD wants rather than what we think it should be
- We may be the only Methodist Church left in the old Harpenden Circuit
- But maybe we’re ready for a revival and will be in a position to “plant” new churches
- We are still here in terms of a people worshipping God (although we may not be in this building)
- We are actually **doing** the things set out in the Draft Vision and Strategy not just agreeing it is a good idea
- That the church is continuing to grow – more people, more youngsters, more men, MORE
- That we are still continuing to serve the needs of the day
- We continue to be attractive to a wide range of theological views
- Be contemporary and relevant
- The place that people go to for healing so healing rooms and ministry available

- The place to go for those in financial need
- We are known to be the place to go for comfort and refuge and access to Father God and His favour
- All ages
- Christ-like
- Relevant to the society of its time – whatever that may be??
- All the activities we offer and more!
- Befriending, encouraging, making disciples
- To be seen as an impact for good
- Sharing God's love
- A place where people feel valued
- We hope and pray it will be the church we still have today!
- Praying church
- Outward-looking church
- Community – known, caring
- Young people – vibrant
- Missionary church
- A thriving church at ease with itself
- In unity with other denominations

Regarding worship

- Packed to the gunwales
- Worshipping church
- Standing room only in the church
- Full services every week
- Evening “celebration” services and guest speakers/seminars
- Evening “celebration” services Spring Harvest Style – but starting September 2014
- Services running every hour 9 to 5 on Sundays
- Let the congregation lead the worship
- Age dynamic in two services reflective of Harpenden population
- Newcomers made equally welcome at both services
- Alternatives on a Sunday for those involved in sport -> would also help men's attendance too
- Diverse services to suit everyone
- Not just Sundays – daily – coffee on tap
- Perhaps more variety in one service
- 24/7 WORSHIP
- Diversity of worship

Regarding mission and outreach

- Offering all the wonderful love and care that we do
- Reaching out to the community around us
- Grow missionaries to go into the world
- Support village churches
- Having several church plants in the area – reaching out into the community, including among the Farmers' Market, shoppers etc. offering help with taking shopping to the car, prayers, whatever.

- A church offering services at different times over the weekend, accommodating those with work and sporting commitments
- The church will be more proactive due to Training - and spreading the Word – and attractive to outsiders
- Our community activities will reap rewards
- Total focus on making and growing disciples
- Community emphasis, with Christians in Harpenden – like Sainsbury's or the Library, - everyone can freely come in - community service provider
- Expanded community programme
- Social action and our own Food Bank
- Stress support and counseling
- Encourage extended families
- Greater transformative effect on the community of Harpenden
- Flourishing of reaching out to the poor and needy
- That we are still committed to serving our community and helping to serve others

Regarding expressing and sharing faith

- Creative opportunities for people to express and share their faith
- Removal of all barriers to having a **dynamic relationship with God**
- Produce worship music
- Creativity encouraged
- Centre for creative art – workshops, space given to artists to express worship, more art on the walls
- Part of the hub of Harpenden, bringing God into every civic area, on councils, involved in charities

Regarding our church building

- Sainsbury's closed – High Street takes the space
- Church opens all day
- Bigger space for coffee during church
- Use Library "Youth Centre" space on Sundays
- Build a "mezzanine floor" in church
- Not building dependent – without walls
- Centre for building and sending out
- Widening scope of worship beyond the building
- Attractive, flexible building
- Take over WH Smith and Sainsbury's
- Different views on venue layout – traditional and utilitarian
- Will outgrow the building
- We would like to see the church being reached such capacity that the need is present to take down the existing building and be replaced with something that is fit for purpose for 2034 and beyond
- We see this becoming a multi-purpose worship centre with a wide range of activities aimed at all age groups
- Capacity to be 500 to 1,000
- 1,000 seat multimedia theatre

- Big auditorium will facilitate all around – similar to many of the contemporary churches

Regarding technology

- Using modern communication, Skype healing rooms, virtual hologram? Minister?
- Shop “on line” – using media and communication much more – integrated fellowship groups
- Increased and growing use of technology -> podcast services
- Community may mean electronic community in 20 years with opportunity to meet up
- We recognise that society is changing – people are working longer; IT, social networking, working at home, use of visual communication will all impact. People could choose to worship at home as part of the congregation etc. We will still need to gather together from time to time, but will that be every week or might we be using networking at home as part of our worship
- There may be no building – all internet?

Regarding youth work

- Vibrant youth work and school programme
- More young people
- Yener’s youth activity grows in future

Regarding Junior Church

- More volunteers for Junior Church – called and trained to do so, especially men
- Junior choir and band*
- Full Junior Church
- We would like a thriving Junior Church

Regarding the workers

- Full team of volunteers
- Could require two ministers plus youth workers

Regarding small groups

- Vibrant house group programme
- Network of cell churches supported by HSMC people
- More Home Groups

Regarding training & equipping

- Training – go out to whole UK
- Mentoring
- Reflect other needs/jobs/commitments
- Biblical teaching

Regarding Wesleys

- Wesleys expanded – lunch etc. breakfast
- Change the name of the church to “Wesleys”

Regarding people groups

- Something for old folk
- For a meal and company/friends
- The church will have a large proportion of the younger generation – to enable it to move on and progress (as well as those on zimmer frames)!
- Everyone has different views on over older
- Every day church opens at 6 am for breakfast, prayer for men and City workers

Regarding governance

- A children's and Youth Church Council separate from existing Church Council and feeding into Church Council

Regarding the local schools and uniformed organisations

- Encourage St George's to be more Community Church minded
- More involvement by uniformed groups throughout the year – Cubs, Guides etc.

Other comments

- Hope is rather ????? in this debate because, even if we agree on it we can have no idea how to deliver it
- This meeting has offered **NO** opportunity for the church membership to discuss any of your pinch-points. This **MUST** be done before **ANY** changes can occur
- Harpenden is very much a “moving-on” community – people come to High Street for a few years because of their work then move on. Those who stay – **get older** – perhaps the age profile won't change greatly. Do we reflect the Harpenden population more than we think?
- We have no control – leave it to God

APPENDIX 3 – Which options best fit our aims?

The following table summarises the responses of those present on Vision Day who were asked to give 3 points to the option they believed would best enable us to achieve our aims, 2 points to the second best option, and 1 point to the third. The nine basic possible options that our January consultations highlighted are:

1. One service every week with a blended style
2. Different styles on alternate weeks
3. Two sequential services in the Hall and leave the Church as it is
4. Swap the service venues around
5. Add a third parallel service in Wesleys
6. Reconfigure or extend the Hall
7. Consecutive services of different styles in the Church
8. Find an alternative venue for the Hall service
9. Have one style on Sundays, another midweek

Responses

No	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5	O6	O7	O8	O9	Comments
1							3			
2							3			
3			2			3	1			
4		2	3		1					
5			3		2					
6			3		1	2				
7			1		3		2			
8			3		1	2				
9				1		2	3			
10			2		1	3				
11				1			3	2		
12				1		2	3			
13			2		3		1			
14	3	1					2			
15	3						1		2	
16	3		1				2			
17				3	2	1				Use space above Library for Junior Church
18						1	3	2		
19					2		3	1		
20							3			
21			2				3	1		
22							3			
23			1			1	3			
24							3			
25			2		1		3			

26						3		2	
27	1		3		2				
28		1	3		2				
29			3		2		1		
30			3			2		1	
31			3			2		1	
32			1			2	3		
33			1				3	2	
34	1		3			2			Has anyone thought about a Saturday evening service?
35				1	2		3		
36		1	2			3			Add a parallel service in Wesleys webcam from the Hall
37			3		1	2			
38			2			1	3		
39	3		1	2					
40				2		1	3		
41			1			3	2		
42			3		1		2		
43				2			3	1	
44					2		3	1	
45	1			2			3		Various Comments
46			2				3	1	
47	2					1	3		
48			2				3	1	
49				2		1	3		
50			1	3			2		
51				2			3		
52		1	3			2			
53			1		2	3			
54					3	2	1		
55			1		2		3		
56							3	1	
57			1	2			3		
58	1	3					2		
59							3		None of the others achieves the objectives defined in the morning
60							3		Other: Traditional Sun morning ans Alternative Sun afternoon at 3.30 Young people play sports or lie in on Sun morning. Could have fellowship/meals at 5 pm after service
61						3	2		
62						3	1	2	
63	3				2			1	
64	3				2			1	

65	1		2				3			
66							3			
67	1			2			3			
68			2				3			
69		2		1			3			
70			1			3	2			
71			2		1		3			
72						2	3			
73			2	1			3			
74			1			2	3			
75	2	1					3			
76	2						3		1	
77		2					3			
78							3			Long comment re 2
79	1			3		2				
80	1			2			3			O2 Confusing. O5 For who? O6 Takes money
81	1			2			3			
82				2			3			O1 Compromise you'll loose [sic] me. O2 Confusing. O6 No money! O8 Breakaway
83	1		2				3			
84	2		3		1					O5 Cfe worship O7 and O8 Worst options to be avoided if possible
85			3		1	2				
86			3		2	1				
87			3		1	2				O7, 8, 9 The 3 worst options
88			3		1	2				
89	3		1				2			A lovely suggestion was made earlier: Family worship at 9; 10 worship all ages; 10.30 2 styles of worship. Could it work here?
Total	39	17	93	37	46	67	173	14	10	