

WEST SWINDON & THE LYDIARDS ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP.
REPORT TO E.C.C. MEETING 26TH MARCH 2008 by Stephen Skinner.

"PARTNERSHIP FOR MISSIONAL CHURCH".

Introduction:

As we consider which resources might help us to become fit for mission & service in the future, Jane & I offer this new process, which looks excellent! It links well with other programmes: Diocesan Growth Strategy, URC Healthy Living, Hope 08. Copies of their main Brochure are available for study – I have obtained a number! Their websites: www.togetherinmission.org www.churchinnovations.org

The big idea:

Their Brochure describes this process as: "A long term relational process to place mission at the heart of the local church." It is further described as "a guided process of spiritual discernment through which each church will be helped to discover just how God is sending it into its community."

It's a **Partnership** in that it involves several congregations working together in a 'cluster' supported by experienced trainers & consultants. It is strategic and spiritual, including times of prayer, worship, fellowship, utilising the 'Spiritual Disciplines'

It's **Missional** because the focus is on equipping each church to participate in God's mission to the world. It is recognised that changing congregational attitudes towards Mission is not easy, which is why the process lasts 3 – 5 years!

There are three key phases to this process:

1. **"Discovery"**. Learning to listen to Scripture, our congregations and the context of our communities. Letting God's Spirit reshape & reform us for sending out to the world. Listening to partners also!
2. **"Experimenting"**. Information & insights gathered in Phase 1 will lead to developing plans of action for innovating missional transformation. At least one 'outreach' programme will be launched for ongoing support & evaluation.
3. **"Embodiment"**. In this final one or two year phase churches will begin moving towards living in God's preferred & promised future. This might lead to restructuring of congregations & their leadership, programmes, priorities etc so they become more 'mission shaped', missionary congregations..

Leaders & church members alike will receive during the whole process: continuing education, leadership training, listening process, mentoring & coaching, on-line support, Retreats, missional action team training, help in producing strategic plans. The COST: £750pa maximum. This is highly subsidised because partners in this Programme (eg Baptists & Anglicans) are keen to support in this initial launch in UK.

I recommend we investigate this seriously & urgently, for possible start in Autumn 08. It's the most thorough such process I've come across. It could make a real difference to our church's culture & effectiveness in mission / outreach. A golden opportunity

for us to work in real missional partnership, with consultants like Revd Paul Rush (Anglican), Revd Nigel Coles (Baptist), Revd Martin Robinson (Bible Society).