

## St. Thomas ' – The next 60 years

When I came here in January 2008 I was very grateful to receive a copy of " St. Thomas ' Church – The first fifty years " by Pat Butler and John Lewis. The character and life of nations, cities, villages, communities and individuals is shaped by what has gone before and we at St. Thomas ' are no exception. Pat and John 's book helped me to understand the character of the Church that I had been invited to lead.

St. Thomas ' was born out of a mission priority to the newly established and growing community of Holtspur. The Church was the product of a spirit of faith, imagination, vision and perseverance. All this is ingrained into our history and is a part of the very nature of who we are.

In 1949 a significant number of families moving into Holtspur would have been Church-going Christians and so the priority was clearly to provide for them the resources to worship locally. The face of the nation though has changed dramatically in the last few decades. We alongside the whole Church have to reconsider how we adapt to being Church in this new era and how we carry out Jesus command to make disciples in our time.

Many churches seem afraid to change. One of the fears is that to renew is to dishonour that which the founders created. There is the pull towards preservation of the original form so that others can see it in its original glory but for Churches that glory fades and dies. The world does not stand still and over the centuries the Church has had to adapt to its mission context. Jesus tells us that in order to save our lives we must be prepared to lose them. St. Thomas ' it seems has often been a Church that is happy to risk letting go of the old in order to try something new. It has valued its tradition but held lightly to it and it is this approach that is urgently needed in today 's context. We honour those who established the church not by trying to preserve for posterity exactly what they created but by aspiring to imitate their imagination and faith.

In 1949 the provision of worship was the means of enabling mission in a new residential area but in our day most people are a long way from worship. Today, many have no idea about Jesus or the Christian faith and feel out of place in a Church service. We therefore, through both word and action, have to take Jesus to others rather than create something to which people can come to find Him.

I believe that this process is under way. We are experimenting and going into places where we don 't know exactly how it 's going to work out. I 'm sure that we are heading along the road that God would have us go and providing we stay with Him and remain in His power we will see something of the wonders of His Kingdom.



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