**Notes on HeartEdge by Rev’d Jonathan Evens of St Martin-in-the-Fields**

HeartEdge is a new ecumenical movement for renewal that has been initiated by St Martin-in-the-Fields with several churches in Westminster becoming early adopters in the movement. As a result, we thought that tonight would provide a good opportunity to explore the model of mission (congregation, compassion, culture and commerce) advocated by HeartEdge and that we could do so by hearing from Westminster churches that have joined HeartEdge. So, in a moment, we will hear from Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Notre Dame de France, St James Piccadilly and St Martin-in-the-Fields about mission initiatives to do with congregation, compassion, culture and commerce. This is therefore an opportunity to hear about innovative mission activity in Westminster and to explore the ways in which integrated approaches to mission impact communities.

HeartEdge supports churches in blending their mission around four key areas:

* Congregation: Inclusive approaches to liturgy, worship and day-to-day communal life.
* Commerce: Commercial activity and social enterprise generating finance, creatively extending and enhancing mission and ministry.
* Culture: Art, music and ideas to re-imagine the Christian narrative for the present moment
* Compassion: Models of outreach serving local need and addressing social justice.

We will hear examples of the 4 Cs in action at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Notre Dame de France, St James Piccadilly and St Martin-in-the-Fields in just a moment, but to set the scene here are four brief examples:

* Congregation: ‘Inspired to Follow: Art and the Bible Story’ is a discipleship course that uses fine art paintings from the National Gallery, a Biblical story and a short theological reflection, as spring boards to help people explore Christian faith today. It has been developed by St Martin-in-the-Fields to offer an open-ended resource for exploring Christian faith by engaging better with our visually-focussed world.
* Commerce: The Crossing At St Paul's Ltd is a local business set in a regenerated church in the centre of Walsall. The Crossing is an exemplary example of creating a new life and role for a town centre church. The aim is to be a heart of celebration in the centre of Walsall. The ground floor consists of seven retail units which celebrate arts and crafts, fashion and flowers, books, gifts and music. The Day Chapel is open to all from Monday to Saturday, 8.3Oam to 5.3Opm, for private prayer and quiet reflection. The first floor includes a restaurant, which provides quality food at competitive prices in an uplifting, smoke-free environment. This level also includes the office of Walsall Carers’ Trust, the Centre Manager’s Office, and the offices of St. Paul’s Church, where a Church of England priest is usually available. The second floor is used for worship by St. Paul’s Church at 10.30am every Sunday. The meeting area and ancillary rooms are also used for a wide variety of functions, including conferences, training events, exhibitions and concerts. ‘The Crossing’ refers to the meeting point of church and community as well as to the crossing over from death to new life in Jesus, which is at the heart of the Christian faith.
* Culture: The Waterloo Festival has become a key part of the work and outreach of St John’s Waterloo each year and has enabled the church to play a much fuller part in the local community. The Waterloo Festival strives to celebrate the local community, heritage and location on the fringe of the South Bank through arts and ideas. Through this synergy they hope to ‘transform minds’ and engage with sustainability. They seek to celebrate the past and its characters as they transformed their communities. A collaboration with Coin Street Community Builders highlighted a remarkable grassroots campaign launched by residents over 30 years ago, which turned the South Bank into today’s booming neighbourhood. They aspire to celebrate the present through innovative music and art. Performers in June 2018 included Southbank Sinfonia, with their audience-centred concerts; Royal Academy of Music students, with an evening of new protest songs, and Berakah Arts, whose concert aimed to bridge religious and cultural divides. Artists and friends of The London Group brought an incredible sculpture exhibition into the churchyard and gardens of St John's, and the latest moving-image art into the crypt. They hope to influence the future by asking questions about issues which affect us all. Housing, community challenges and the transformative power of art came under the spotlight in talks and debates; while urban pollution was the subject of a display of ‘Living Lab’ technology. Their very first Word Weekend celebrated the winners of the Waterloo Festival Writing Competition and included street theatre, workshops, a book fair and more.
* Compassion: Grassmarket Community Project (Scottish Social Enterprise of the Year 2017) has been developed in partnership by Greyfriars Kirk (Church of Scotland) and the Grassmarket Mission. Grassmarket Community Project takes an innovative approach to create community and provide sanctuary and support to participants, many of whom are amongst the most vulnerable of our citizens. Through mentoring, social enterprise, training and education in a nurturing environment, the Project develops skills which enable participants to develop to their full potential and move away from cycles of failure.

HeartEdge is saying that Commerce, Compassion, Culture, Congregation are essential because in our view it’s all church and because they provide an holistic approach to mission that reflects key essential ingredients to human flourishing and an engagement with a breadth of civic society. The integration of this model, while rooted in a vibrant congregational life, means that the wider operations (of compassion, cultural expression and commerce) are not seen as secondary or simply instrumental to mission, but as creative and challenging forms of church in their own right. Sam Wells, the Vicar of St Martin’s has noted that cultural, commercial and charitable programmes rooted in a vibrant congregational life create ‘a vision of a civil economy, of what work and play, friendship and worship, social concern and evangelism, diversity and identity might look like.’

Commerce is the part of the 4 Cs about which church people often have the greatest reservations, so it worth saying a little more about that. HeartEdge is about the creative work of financial sustainability. This is about sustainable ways to secure things we love, but may fear are dying. HeartEdge helps secure ways to finance our vision and plan for the future. Commercial activity is a vital part of this work, a practical expression of faith, a central component in the mission of the church. Commercial activity is about maximising resources, managing risk, promoting opportunity and generating unrestricted financial income.

*[Presentations from Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Notre Dame de France, St James Piccadilly and St Martin-in-the-Fields]*

HeartEdge was launched in February 2017 and has grown to become an ecumenical and international network of churches and other organisations with a mission model of congregation, compassion, culture and commerce (the 4C’s). Our 54 members range from Aberdeen to Amsterdam and Baltimore to Brighton, whilst encompassing churches and Cathedrals from Shoeburyness & Thorpe Bay Baptist Church to Coventry Cathedral. HeartEdge brings churches and other organisations together to make connections, share ideas, do theology and develop mission.

Network: Being together, making connections

1. HeartEdge Day: offers theology, practical ideas and connections; an intensive bespoke programme focused on mission and our four Cs; commerce, congregation, culture compassion. Contributors, all practitioners learning by doing, experts by experience. A moment to share insights, learning, experience, ideas.
2. HeartEdge Conference: our annual two-day intensive on ideas, connections, theology and mission. An eclectic programme and diverse mix of experienced global practitioners – people learning by doing – highlighting effective work, questioning challenges, offering ways through. Also celebrating members achievement.
3. HeartEdge Consultancy, is a half-day at your church, focused around your questions, experience and concern, going deeper into issues about ministry and your context. Then sharing with a bespoke team of practitioners, stories of experience, ideas and approaches – inspiring, practical and equipping.
4. HeartEdge Workshops: practical half-days focused on aspects of one of our four Cs.
   * Disability Groups – Development where disabled people ‘join in’, not just ‘get in’.
   * Great Sacred Music – Sharing faith insights with mainstream, secular audiences.
   * International Groups – Hospitality with those with no recourse to public funds.
   * Stand-up Theology – Theological reflection via comedy and performance.
   * City Chaplain – Mixing ideas, enterprise and support emerging from Amsterdam
   * Start:Stop – Early morning reflections for busy commuters developed in the city
   * Nazareth Community – building community and deepening discipleship

Communication: Sharing experience, developing together

1. HeartEdge Brokerage: HeartEdge members share a Snapshot about their church and context, used to match with the circumstances and experience of other churches.
2. HeartEdge Meet-Ups: enables members to find and meet up with others sharing similar contexts and challenges, to ask questions and find answers and support.
3. Hub Church: facilitating HeartEdge in your area, with members growing support, resource and hosting regular events.
4. HeartEdge Mailer: Useful monthly email with links to material around the 4Cs.

Resource: HeartEdge related publications

* Incarnational Ministry: Being with the Church (Norwich: Canterbury 2017)
* Incarnational Mission: Being with the World (Norwich: Canterbury 2018)
* Liturgy on the Edge: Pastoral & Attractional Worship (Norwich: Canterbury 2018)

In the course of our first phase of development we have been introducing HeartEdge, its mission model, and some specific mission opportunities to a range of churches while encouraging them to review their own missional approaches. As an indication of the reach achieved through our initial programme, we have:

* run a national conference on 12 and 13 September 2018 at St Martin’s and Lambeth Palace with input from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop of Liverpool and General Secretary of Churches Together in England which was attended by 140 people;
* run 7 HeartEdge Introductory Days (London, Bristol, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Manchester and Inverness) each attended by around 80 delegates;
* run 6 Mission Model model workshops (Great Sacred Music, Inspired to Follow, International Groups and Start:Stop) attended by 100 people;
* run events on commerce (Birmingham), music (Edinburgh) and visual art (Edinburgh) attended by 160 people;
* run panel sessions on the 4C's at the Greenbelt Festival attended by 720 people;
* run consultancy days for 7 churches (Bristol, Hertford, Hitchin, Redruth, Shoeburyness & Thorpe Bay, Southwark and Brighton) involving 75 people;
* run a sharing session on engaging with vulnerable adults for 10 people (Bloomsbury, Hoxton and SMITF);
* organised 8 visits to St Martin's and other member churches (Ealing, Edinburgh, Hitchin, Nottingham, Southwark) involving 30 people;
* book launch at St Martin’s and 3 HeartEdge lectures at Bell Vue Baptist Church Southend and St Luke’s Maidenhead;
* added to and promoted Inspired to Follow: Art and the Bible Story;
* shared films of the 2019 Autumn Lecture Series at St Martin’s with HeartEdge churches, together with a study guide for use with their congregations; and
* recruited a Sheppard Scholar at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

Therefore, around 1,780 people have gained some direct benefits from our activities to date.

Our future plans (2018/19) include:

* Introductory Days – Exeter; Hamilton (6 February 2018); Liverpool; Newcastle; Norwich (with the Diocese of Norwich); Nottingham; and Portsmouth (24 September, as Bishop’s Study Day).
* Consultancy Days – Banbury, Brighton (10 November 2018); Oxford; Rochdale; and a minimum of 7 other churches;
* Mission Model workshops – organise 8 Mission Model workshops (including workshops on the Nazareth Community, Inspired to Follow, Start:Stop and Great Sacred Music);
* Inspired to Follow - new courses added to the website;
* Holland - a HeartEdge event in Holland, organised with CityKerk Amsterdam and Jacobikerk Utrecht;
* Conference - a second HeartEdge conference to be held in Edinburgh at the Parish Church of St Cuthbert and St John’s Episcopal Church, linked to the Chalmers Lectures;
* Sheppard Scholars - trial a year-long programme of theological study and practical pastoral work for Sheppard Scholars with Pastoral Assistants from St Peter & St Paul Nottingham, St James Piccadilly and St Martin’s;
* Sheppard Scholars – identify 7 HeartEdge hub churches able to host a Sheppard Scholar from September 2019 and assist them in recruiting these Scholars.
* Hub churches – identify HeartEdge hub churches able to organise events on the 4C’s and/or Mission Model workshops for their region and assist the organisation of these events with consultancy funds;
* Initiate the matching of HeartEdge members to encourage peer-to-peer mentoring.
* Encouraging HeartEdge members to visit other HeartEdge churches of relevance to their mission and ministry, including visits to St Martin’s;
* St Martin’s – Events, including a Parish Away Day, bringing HeartEdge members to St Martin’s to share their learning and stories with the St Martin’s community;
* Greenbelt 2019 – organise a programme of panel sessions connecting with the theme of ‘Wit and Wisdom’; and
* Film and disseminate the Autumn Lecture Series at St Martin’s for HeartEdge Churches.

HeartEdge is needed because the Church faces a changed mission context, primarily because of the growth of secularism, in which, in the Church and outside, we are dominated by a narrative of decline. In the Church of England, we have begun to respond to this situation and the narratives of decline by a narrowing of mission and Church traditions. Renewal and Reform has been criticised for primarily funding church planting initiatives because such initiatives promise increased numbers. HeartEdge is needed as a means of addressing our changed mission context in ways that support the current breadth of Church tradition and practice.

So we seek national renewal of Church and society, but not by imposing a single model that others should replicate. HeartEdge seeks to catalyse kingdom communities – i.e. it aims to foster, not to impose; it sees the kingdom as God’s gift to renew the church, rather than as a mission-field to be conformed to the church’s image; and it sees churches as lively and dynamic communities, rather than defensive and narrow congregations. HeartEdge is already big enough for communities to mentor one another, to offer consultancy days to one another, and for larger gatherings to offer an exchange of ideas, encouragement and challenge. We aspire for it not to create clones of St Martin’s, but to become the national embodiment of those committed to the vision of catalyzing communities of trust and support and love that show what kind of life is possible when we believe that God is sovereign and doing so because there is so much distrust in the world, so much violence and hatred and cruelty and most of all so much fear.

The challenges that we face in Church and society then become the opportunity to develop something new – just as the period of Exile in Israel’s history became a time of renewal leading to the formation of the Hebrew scriptures as we know them today. In order to make that happen it is vital to begin by focusing on our assets, not deficits, and to see that the renewal of the Church will come from those who are on the edge, rather than those at the centre.

I hope this exploration of HeartEdge and the 4 Cs has been an interesting and engaging exploration of the ways in which integrated approaches to mission impact communities and will encourage you to consider the possibility of joining HeartEdge.