

## THE STORY SO FAR...

### Lawley & Lightmoor



In the early part of 2009, a new 'community church' began in Lawley and Lightmoor, on the western side of Telford. It is part of the Church of England family and is called 'a Fresh Expression', just one of many new evangelism and church planting ventures in the UK.

Right from the start, the leadership team have been excited by a 'kingdom vision', a vision of the growth, transformation and healing that comes when God's love and power begin to touch people's lives.



Through 2009, the team organised a number of community events, joined in with events in the local school and worked with other community partners to explore what it might mean to 'develop and grow the local community'. A monthly café-style service called "Community Worship" was started in the local school to provide a place where people could meet one another and 'dip their toes in the water'. It was a small but exciting beginning.

Through the summer of 2009, the team began to develop a 'founding vision' to express what might lie ahead. It drew on the parables of Jesus, the teaching in John Chapter 15 and Paul's letter to the church in Corinth. It also expressed some core convictions we had learned from others who were 'pioneers' in church planting and fresh expressions. It was a picture of what a healthy church might look like. It was a picture of a growing church... a fruitful church!



And here it is :-

**“our vision** is to **nurture and grow** a new **church** which is **rooted, flourishing** and **fruitful** and which has **worship, community** and **mission** in its very **dna**”

The team also developed a way of expressing the 'values' which would guide its life in the future. These reflected the experiences and convictions of the team as well as a sense of how to nurture the activities of the church as it grew. These values are as follows :-

**rooted** \* in God's love \* in our communities \*  
 in the message of Jesus \* in Telford \* in the scriptures  
 \* **flourishing** \* growing up \* reaching out  
 \* deepening relationships \* being transformed \*  
**fruitful** \* proclaiming Jesus \* touching lives \*  
 \* acting with love and kindness \* taking risks \*  
 bringing in the kingdom \*

So far, so good! It felt like a biblical vision, an organic vision, an exciting vision, a kingdom vision.

But the team also had a sense that something was missing.



Then, through the Autumn, God began to speak at the "monthly prayer gathering", a place where people gathered to pray for the work. At the same time, a number of people were reading a book by Mark Stibbe called "break out". The final piece of the jigsaw was listening to a talk given by Paul Maconochie. We realised that God was giving us a vision of A RIVER. A river which was going to flow in TELFORD, a river which was going to flow in DRY PLACES.

In Ezekiel's prophetic vision in chapter 47, the River flows out from the place of worship (the temple) and out into the desert. We were excited to read that trees sprang up on the banks of the River. These trees reminded us of the vision we had of our church – rooted, flourishing and fruitful. Now it was clear how and why – it was because of the River. It was miraculous (trees growing in a desert!), it was spontaneous and the result was the total transformation of the landscape.

"...so where the river flows everything will live."

*"Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."* the book of Ezekiel, chapter 47.

In Mark Stibbe's book "BREAKOUT" we discovered 4 themes which resonated with us: (a) the **direction** of the River (b) the **increase** of the River (c) the **impact** of the River and (d) the **fruit** of the River. All of these confirmed what was in our hearts – the desire not to draw people in to something but the desire to move out. They expressed a longing for God and for the kingdom transformation which happens when God's love and mercy begin to flow powerfully. So we feel that we have found a name:-

River Community Church.

It expresses our desire to be a church **OF** the River, a community **BY** the River, a people **IN** the River.. and that's what we're praying for!