What
are we doing?

Big Church/ Little Church

Big Church is a church service.

Little Church is a small gathering - with an emphasis on discipleship maturity and mission.

Everyone is part of a Little Church gathering as well as being welcome to Big Church.

Why
are we doing it?

Discipleship & Mission

Church is about providing an environment for worship, growth and welcome - especially for those who are not familiar with a church setting.

Our previous shape did little to create this environment.

We are leaving behind a model that leaves prayer, mission, learning & pastoral care in the hands of leaders and instead share these responsibilities.

Who
are we doing it for?

Everyone

Many people in our culture & community know little or nothing about life in the church.

Barriers to church can include social expectations, the set-apart building, a need for quiet and an expectation that children will be separated from their parents at church.

Some disciples have spent years in churches without much (or any) change in spiritual maturity.

How
is it going?

Excitement & Challenges

Some have felt this the new thing is 'not proper church' and have been reluctant, or resistant. This has been focused mostly on how we do our Big Church gathering, which does not feature a traditional sermon and has a more all-age focus.

Attitudes to mission are changing in healthy ways.

Spiritual growth and maturing are noticeable across the church.

When
are we doing it?

Sunday mornings & weekdays +

Big Church takes place on the 2nd, 4th and 5th Sunday each month.

Some Little Church gatherings meet on Sunday morning, while others get together on a midweek evening.

Where
are we doing it?

Homes, our building, school

Twice each month, Big Church takes place in a local school hall.

On a 5th Sunday, we use our home building, a converted shop in the town centre, to gather.

Four out of five Little Church gatherings are held in the homes of members.

Watchet Baptist Church

Priorities:
Prayer
Accountability
Mission
Hospitality
Learning
Commitment

2019
early discussions
& much prayer

2020
'normal' interrupted
& much prayer

2021
how to return?
& much prayer

2022
Uncertainty, a 12 month trial period
& much prayer

2023
weighing up priorities
& much prayer

2023
choosing the new
& much prayer

2024
success, challenge
& much prayer

Observations & Tips

Pray before, during and after - at every stage

It is possible for a local church to make a transition
Be prepared for it to take time (Stoke Gifford, Burlington)
Hold the course

Ask allies to help you keep perspective
Direct the congregation back to what God is saying
Be aware that discipleship is not automatic but takes choices

Challenge events that are done by some for others
Maintain patience and pastoral sensitivity
Remember that it remains Jesus' church at all times

Some people would rather that the church
died than changed

John McGinley: There are no well-worn paths into the future.

Andy Thomas: I remember it vividly when, on a Sunday, I'd preached my socks off and I had this moment of realisation that this was like going to a show; something just died in me.

Simon Harris: We said to the church that we're acting like a yacht club. But we need to launch lifeboat to help save people.

Dave Criddle: What came before was a one-size-fits-all and all-roads-lead-to-Sunday, so there was only one way for people to connect. The change means more potential entry points to the community of faith. The environment is better for equipping Christians for mission.

Louise Gilbertson: The church is an older congregation that has been preached to for a lot of years - but this has not necessarily led to practical, whole-life discipleship with a confidence to share faith. Our Sunday gatherings have become more interactive with lots of encouragement to apply what we are learning.

A report on other churches doing similarly