

Let Us Talk about the Personality and Character: Boscombe Church

At Boscombe, the response was that, given the limited resources, of people and finance, the PCC felt everything was being done that could be done. The Stewardship campaign in September 2012 led to a number of new regular donations, which have been much appreciated, but not to any more regular attendance or deeper involvement in the life of the church. The vision is to seek to encourage residents to engage with the two services each month, particularly emphasising the 'outreach through music' at the 'Songs of Praise' service, involving (young) musicians if at all possible. Prayer, and the ministry of the two LPAs in Allington & Boscombe, remain the bedrock of the Christian witness outside of Sunday services and the annual Richard Hooker day activities.

Cholderton Church

1. What is the 'Personality and Character' of your local church?

We are a rural church in a small village with around 100 houses in the parish. The opportunities for meeting are restricted to the village hall, the church and the pub. (There is no school or shop in walking distance from village.) Those with young families are busy and football, swimming or horse riding usually take priority at the week-end.

More people wish to support the church than come to services on any sort of regular basis, but their monthly donations are small. We do well at providing a focus for celebrating events throughout the year; Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas are usually better attended.

The church itself was completed in 1850, replacing a small damp church. It is tall and light, built under a hammer beam roof, with beautiful fittings including carved pew ends with different plants, fruit and flowers on each. The churchyard is large with plenty of room for more burials – but costly to mow.

Two years ago we were completing the rebuilding of our church bell tower and we had a successful fundraising campaign for this. But finding money for general church running and paying our Fairer Share is harder and we had a deficit last year and expect a larger deficit this year, eroding our savings which we had hoped to spend on improved lighting and heating.

2. What are the priorities of your local church?

We try to make everyone feel welcome when they attend church and there are a variety of services to meet different needs. We provide coffee and biscuits after church for people to chat and have something warm before walking home.

We are most fortunate to have a good relationship with the Village Hall Committee and those on the PCC try to support their events and they give us free use of the hall. The weekly coffee morning in the hall has people who do not attend church along with those that do and the proceeds are split between the village hall and the church.

3. Is there one thing you would like to take on in the coming year (recognising that may mean you may need to stop doing something else)?

To kick off our Stewardship campaign we are going to give a "Thank You" drinks and nibbles in May in the village hall after a Songs of Praise service in the church, to thank all those who clean, do flowers or give regularly to the church. We are liaising with John Kilbee over the best way to take our Stewardship campaign forward.

4. Are there ways in which we can work together to achieve more?

We are developing a relationship with the Rare Breeds Farm, a mile outside the village, and our Rector has conducted events there for Harvest and Christmas with many children attending. They are planning a labyrinth / sacred garden area and more of us on the PCC need to help establish this link.

In addition we need to consolidate the work of the All Age service and will be looking at ad hoc "messy church" at different times of the year to engage with the families in the village.

5. How can we best measure the quality and impact of church life?

By listening to what villagers say and really find out if we are meeting their needs. We are good at providing a space for all to join in with the celebrations of key life events, Baptism, Marriage, and to offer dignified and personal care during the funeral and mourning process, but is this enough? Do all villagers feel welcomed and comfortable coming to church services? We suspect that some in the village do not feel the church is for people like them and this is something we need to address.

Idmiston Porton with Gomeldon

1. Characteristics/personality – welcoming, friendly, all age.
2. Priority: encourage for young people/adults; sacred space in garden.
3. Coming year: space around church room; refurbished church room to encourage greater use by local community, providing place of quiet and reflection.
4. Take on more: work with deanery school worker and deanery mission enabler, opportunities for midweek prayer and reflective time.
5. Quality of church life: Sound financial planning, service to the community.

A reminder that rural churches struggle to fill roles.

Newton Tony

1) What is the “Personality and Character” of your local church?

We are a welcoming community valuing the traditions of BCP.

2) What are the priorities of your local church?

Survival. There are very few people to take on roles and we are struggling to raise sufficient funds to keep ourselves afloat. However, we try very hard in our mission to reach out to the community.

3) Is there one thing you would like to take on in the coming year (recognizing that may mean you may need to stop doing something else)?

We would like to increase stewardship/raise funds. We would also like to reach out better to young families i.e. starting a messy church.

4) Are there ways in which we can work together to achieve more?

Reduce administration and paperwork. Streamline meetings. Redraw rules for how each parish runs as small parishes find it hard to operate within rules adopted to run bigger parishes.

5) How can we best measure the quality and impact of church life?

By the way we engage as a credible part of the community such as being involved with the school, the fete and fund raising events.

St. Michael & All Angels’ PCC on 5th March, 2013

Q.1. What is the ‘Personality and Character’ of your local church?

We are a welcoming and caring congregation seeking to engage with all who come to worship and join in the fellowship of our sharing community. We are a happy and friendly church offering a broad range of services to attract and support varying traditions and understanding of the Christian Faith.

Q.2. What are the priorities of your local church?

Prayer is held to be very much the essence of our church and it is a widely held view that this is one of the most important parts of our life together. After every Sunday service prayer ministry is offered to those wishing to come forward for individual needs, whether personal or for others, and a Prayer Box is placed in the church during services for people to place written requests. These are then confidentially prayed over by the ministry team at the end of the service. This is used widely and regularly by many people and prove its value and worth. Our mission not only to those attending regularly but to the wider community is what we are called to do as Christ commanded us. We have a Healing Team who meet together at set times throughout the year and it is this group which was instrumental in starting the after service prayer ministry. We also have groups who meet away from the church building and pray blessings on the area as a whole.

After a lapsed period our Sunday School was restarted on Advent Sunday in 2011 and has had mixed success. We are aware of outside influences which draw on families on Sundays, but our dedicated team are always available offering lively and engaging sessions to the children.

We are also conscious of the need to meet the financial responsibility of Fairer Share.

Q.3. Is there one thing you would like to take on in the coming year?

Having just undergone an eight month Facilities Project to provide a new toilet and kitchenette in the church, we now see this very much as enabling us to attract groups into the building for them to use it in fresh ways. The very fact that we have a toilet we hope will make St.Michael's more 'user friendly'! We are very fortunate in having Rev. Penny Joyce as an Associate Minister working with the rapidly growing community at Old Sarum by the Portway and the PCC agreed to focus more practical support on this area of outreach in the Parish.

Q.4. Are there ways in which we can work together to achieve more?

Reduction of bureaucracy and streamlining of paperwork would free up time for greater pastoral involvement, particularly for clergy, in parishes.

Q.5. How can we best measure the quality and impact of church life?

Witnessing the fruits of the spirit (John 15: 1-17); (Galatians 5: 22-26) Seeing a deepening of spirituality. We have been encouraged by new members joining the church and worshipping regularly. Already we have fourteen new names added to the Electoral Roll.

Winterbourne Gunner

1. What is the 'Personality and Character' of our local church?

a. The church of St Mary the Virgin, Winterbourne Gunner was built in the period 1180 to 1220 in the Manor of Winterbourne Cherborough, possibly by John de Chyreborough who, it is recorded, died in 1269 "possessed of the church". The second manor in the parish was Winterbourne Gunner, named after Gunnora de la Mare, the lady of the manor who died in 1249. Both manors passed into the ownership of John Shewter in 1570 when the village became more usually known as Winterbourne Gunner.

b. St Mary's PCC keeps the church building open 24 hours a day. This has its dangers but we are keen to keep the church available to all who need spiritual comfort or physical shelter at all times.

c. The church has seating for 49 in the Nave and Tower areas plus a further 10 on the choir stalls in the Chancel. It is not unusual for between 130 and 170 adults and children to attend the Crib Service or an Easter Service for the local school.

d. The Electoral Roll numbers 39, which has fallen from 54 in 1998, but has held steady at that level since 2009 despite the loss of parishioners who have either died or moved from the area. The age profile is 'mature' with 3 members below 40, all of whom live and work well outside of the village; of the remainder, 16 are between 70 and mid-90s.

e. Only 12 of the 39 members on the Electoral Roll live in Winterbourne Gunner Parish; 7 of these serve on the PCC which, excluding the Vicar, comprises 11 members.

f. Although the Electoral Roll is small, the congregation is very loyal with an average of 17 attending our Sunday service; between 10 and 15 at morning prayer and 20 to 25 at communion services.

g. The building is much loved; over the last decade considerable sums have been expended to:

- renovate listed monuments in the churchyard.
- renovate the two bells and re-hang the second.
- re-render and re-lime wash the Tower walls.
- fit new convector heaters.
- create more room in the chancel by removing oak choir stalls and constructing two prayer desks from the wood.
- maintain the many mature trees and shrubs in the churchyard.
- refurbish the 68 metre long footpath which is the only access to the church. There is no access for vehicles and no adjacent car parking area other than verges (however, at times we are able to use the field adjacent to the church with permission from the farmer if his cows are not loose in the field).

h. Due to the work carried out at 1g above, PCC monetary reserves have, for a number of years, been getting smaller despite the generosity of our church members, a successful fundraising campaign for the tower renovation amongst church members and the local communities and various grants from external charitable organisations.

i. Despite the advancing years of many, our congregation members maintain a strong community spirit looking out beyond the church to serve the local and wider communities. Areas of local and national community life in which they are engaged include:

- (1) A Foundation Governor of a local C of E Primary School.
- (2) A Governor of Salisbury Cathedral School.
- (3) A Governor of a local Grammar School
- (4) A President and Vice President of the local Scout Council.
- (5) Member and Treasurer of a Mothers' Union Branch.
- (6) Chairman of a local Day Centre for the Elderly.
- (7) Driver for a local Day Centre for the Elderly.
- (8) Volunteer Helper and Home/Hospital Visitor for the Day Centre for the Elderly.
- (9) Membership of U3A.
- (10) Membership of a local brass band.
- (11) Membership of a local opera and local ladies singing group.
- (12) Assistance at the Trussell Trust in Salisbury.
- (13) Membership of the Glebe Hall Committee in Winterbourne Earls.
- (14) Membership of and periodic Treasurer for the Winterbourne Fete Committee.
- (15) Lay Cannon and member of Chapter at Salisbury Cathedral.
- (16) Snr Indep. Dir and Vice Chairman Salisbury NHS Trust.
- (17) Lay Chairman of organ donation committee and clinical governance committee.
- (18) President of Veterinary Benevolent Fund.
- (19) Chairman of University Federation of Animal Welfare.
- (20) Chairman of Humane Slaughter Association.
- (21) Director at large of World Aquatic Veterinary Medical Association.
- (22) Three members of the church congregation organise the Moviola film shows for the Winterbournes.
- (23) Assistance with running the charity jumble sales at the Glebe Hall.
- (24) Membership of various Winterbourne societies including the Historical Society.
- (25) Secretary of local WI.
- (26) Treasurer of local WI.
- (27) Drivers for Bourne Valley Link.
- (28) Secretary of local Over 60's Club.
- (29) Treasurer of local Over 60's Club.
- (30) Secretary of a local Charitable Trust.

j. The Book of Common Prayer is used at services at St Mary's Church. This seems to be filling a need as most of our regular church members come from outside of the parish.

k. Although we have been eating into our reserves we still maintain a good level of charitable giving, normally to 5 charities (local, national and international) and still pay the full Diocesan, Deanery and Team Shares.

2. What are the priorities of our local church?

The priorities of the PCC at St Mary's Church are generated by:

- a. The small number and mature age of our parishioners.
- b. The few people capable and willing to undertaking projects outside of their own personal lives, often due to the fact that they have for many years taken on key posts within the PCC and outside as shown at para 1i above.

- c. The over-burdening of various PCC officers.
- d. The small size of the church and its lack of a water supply and toilets.

Our priorities are therefore to:

- a. Maintain the financial viability of the church whilst continuing supporting charitable giving..
- b. Maintain the integrity of the building and churchyard.
- c. To enhance the relationship between the church and the Military Camp in Winterbourne Gunner.
- d. To undertake a Stewardship project.
- e. To grow the church. If we do not do this, St Mary's Church has no future beyond the next 10 - 20 years.

3. Is there one thing you would like to take on in the coming year (recognising that may mean you may need to stop doing something else)?

The most urgent task is to run a Stewardship campaign. The key factor affecting our ability to do this is the availability of those few people willing and able to plan and action this. These people are already deeply involved in either full time work or charitable voluntary work within and without the church and cannot stop doing this.

4. Are there ways in which we can work together to achieve more?

- a. Centralising the administration of the fees for weddings and funerals at Team level. This is working well in the Bourne Valley Team.

5. How can we best measure quality and impact of church life?

- a. Ask ourselves what would be the impact if church members stopped carrying out the tasks at para 1i above?
- b. By sustaining or growing congregations.

By Henri Nouwen - Being Sent Into the World

Each of us has a mission in life. Jesus prays to his Father for his followers, saying: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

We seldom realise fully that we are sent to fulfil God-given tasks. We act as if we have to choose how, where, and with whom to live. We act as if we were simply plopped down in creation and have to decide how to entertain ourselves until we die. But we were sent into the world by God, just as Jesus was. Once we start living our lives with that conviction, we will soon know what we were sent to do.