

Let Us Talk

Response from Benefice of Broughton Gifford, Great Chalfield and Holt St Katharine.

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

We are a mixed economy. We are three village churches, offering between us a variety of service styles. Great Chalfield offers BCP and attracts those from the other two villages who enjoy this style of worship. Services in the other churches range from CW communion, to creative home-grown services of the Word. Creativity is an important part of who we are. In Holt the work among young families is particularly strong, with Tiny Tots (Mother and Toddlers), Junior Church and large Youth Group. We have 10 homegroups meeting weekly and we take 100 people on a weekend away each year. We like having fun!

2. What are the priorities of your local church?

Mission: In our mission we are innovative and involved in our community. At Great Chalfield we have a 'Quiet Garden'. We have an outreach tent at the Holt music festival each year. We offer something akin to Back to Church Sunday which we call 'Red Carpet Sunday' where we literally roll out a red carpet to welcome folks. We offer Men's Breakfast in local pubs, ladies' lunches. We are always thinking up new ways of reaching out.

Schools: We are very much engaged in the life of our two church primary schools, offering weekly both 'Open the Book' and Clergy led assemblies.

Building Community and Putting Church at the Centre of Community: As an example last year at Broughton Gifford we ran the village Olympics which was very successful in accomplishing both of those aims (and included lesser known sports such as mackerel juggling...) and which finished up with a lot of new people in church for a Songs of Praise.

Discipling: We want people to be excited about their faith, and see that's it is real and it works. We have just had a lot of excitement in running a healing/prayer ministry course.

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

In Holt we are working on launching a teatime family service and formulating plans to re-order the church to be able to use the space in the building more flexibly so that it works in terms of the worshipping community we are becoming.

In Broughton Gifford we are aiming to put a toilet in the church.

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

There are signs that this is already happening. The Deanery now runs its own LPA training. Deanery Synods have been on practical topics e.g. successful engagement with church primary schools, Mission Action Planning, Youth Work, and these have translated into new initiatives and working across boundaries.

With Andrew's involvement in Melksham, we have been drawn in that direction, helping them with musicians and coming together for some services. We are involved in the debt counselling in Melksham.

The Youth groups of Holt, Winsley, Bradford on Avon and Melksham work together for some of their meetings.

In this Deanery we have come to the conclusion that it is better to let the 'cross boundary' stuff develop naturally from relationship, rather than by trying to impose structures.

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

This is difficult but statistics are one indicator – the fairer share count numbers – How many join in for major festivals – numbers of vocations emerging out of the congregations (Priest, LLM, LPA etc) and taken over a longer period these statistics may give a good picture of whether churches are declining, holding their own, or growing.

It is important to recognise that the impact of church life is a complicated equation. Feeding into the lives of schools and children may only bear real fruit much later on. As churches we are only doing a good job when we are continually being taken to new places in the community in which we are set; continually returning to the same places will cause us to become stuck in ruts!

Keep turning over new soil:-

Hosea 10:12

'Sow righteousness for yourselves,
reap the fruit of unfailing love,
and break up your unploughed ground;
for it is time to seek the Lord,
until he comes
and showers his righteousness on you.'