

The Parish of Devizes, St John with St Mary

Our Response to "Let Us Talk"

April 2013

Our parish responded to Bishop Nicholas' Initiative by reflecting on his questions during a series of sermons and congregational feedback throughout Advent 2012. The PCC met for a full day session after Sunday worship on February 10th to consider those congregational responses and begin to formulate our parish response. Further consideration was made at the PCC meeting on March 14th and again at a full day session after Sunday worship on April 28th. We offer the thoughts below as our response to the initiative

- What is the 'Personality and Character' of your local church?
- What are the priorities of your local church?
- 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)?
- Are there ways in which we can work together to achieve more?
- How can we best measure the quality and impact of church life?

We Considered what is the personality and character of our church?

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS IN FEBRUARY

- We feel that the personality and character of our church is:
 - a. Accepting of a wide range of diversity in all its forms
 - b. Our style is on the 'high' side of 'middle'
 - c. Traditional but open to change and the movement of the Holy Spirit
 - d. Welcoming and caring
 - e. Generous to those in need
 - f. Spiritual – we offer many opportunities to explore our faith
 - g. Outward looking – we support Opendoor, Foodbank, Amnesty, shoe boxes etc.
 - h. Good relationships with other churches (including ecumenically)

Statement of our Personality and Character agreed on 28th April 2013-05-08

- "We strive to be a truly open, inclusive Church. We value the wide ranging diversity within our congregation. We believe that living together with our differences, even if sometimes we fail to do so, is an important witness to unity. Traditional, sacramental liturgy is at the heart of our worshipping life, but we are open to change and the movement of the Holy Spirit. We offer a range of opportunities to explore faith and the spiritual life, through study, prayer, reflection and action. We seek to be welcoming, caring and generous to those in need. We try to be outward looking in partnership with other churches and the wider community in support of Devizes Foodbank, Devizes Opendoor Drop In Centre, Operation Christmas Child (Shoebboxes), Amnesty and other opportunities for mission, local and globally."

We Identified Three Priorities: Mission, Ministry and Money

Mission

- A priority of our church is to be an effective agent of God's Mission in our parish and, in partnership with others, across the whole town of Devizes.

"The functions of parochial church councils shall include—co-operation with the incumbent in promoting in the parish **the whole mission** of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;" Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956

Ministry

- A priority of our church is to put to full use the gifts and talents of lay and ordained members of the church across the variety and range of opportunities for service within the parish and in partnership with others across the town and deanery.

"Ministry in the Church of England"

Preface from the Archbishop of Canterbury

The letters of St Paul often tell us about all the gifts the Church needs in order for it to do its work and to be itself. **Everyone** From **has something Jesus Christ has given them which has to be shared with the whole community**. Among these gifts is a cluster of things that all have to do with taking some kind of responsibility for the Church's growth and the Church's direction - the apostle, the prophet, the teacher, and so on.

Key partners in both Mission and Ministry are the churches of other denominations. We will need to ensure that our priorities and those of other Church of England Parishes in Devizes are worked through our involvement in the Devizes Partnership of Churches together with RC, Baptist, Pentecostal, Methodist/URC and Society of Friends congregations.

Money

- Money is needed to enable us to pay for the costs of Mission and Ministry
- A priority of our church is to meet the cost of Parish Share from our regular planned giving. This would release other income to support mission projects, parish activity and in development of our buildings.
- The importance of Christian Stewardship is explored annually through our Focus on Faith and the Future Programme

We identified One thing to take on

- Keeping our churches open
- Welcoming Tourists and Pilgrims
- A Church Shop
- Signage and security
- Volunteers to church sit and welcome/guide/pray?

And what may need to give way

- Those things which do not energise or enthuse us
- Those things that drain us and our resources

- Those things which have little impact on our sense of mission as a church

We looked at how we might work better together, both as CofE parishes in the town and Deanery and ecumenically.

- Deanery
- Sharing resources for mission and ministry across Devizes Deanery
- Other Parishes in the Township
- Southbroom, St James
- Devizes, St Peter
- Bishop's Cannings, St Mary Development of work with Young People
- Development of work with elderly people
- A bigger pool of clergy and authorised lay ministers
- Lunch/Afternoon Tea Club for older members of the community – Volunteers to prepare and cook, to serve and talk/listen, to offer lifts to collect and take home?
- Developing our work with The Trinity School – team of “buddies” to help with classroom/ individual reading, walking to and from school for events such as swimming etc, “Open the Book” Bible Assembly team?

Again we cannot stress enough the importance in our setting or working in partnership, ecumenically through the Devizes Partnership of Churches. Though this must not be an excuse for the CofE parishes in the township of Devizes finding ways of working more closely together for our Common Good and for the furthering of deanery and diocesan strategy.

We pondered on the question about best measuring impact and quality and would want some advice on how best that is done. Perhaps we need to ask experienced consultants in this field?

- Parish share numbers?
- A breadth of activity well supported?
- Doing a small number of things and doing them well?
- Survey of the town and opinion of members of the wider community?
- Measurable objectives?
- How to measure the intangible – spirituality?