

St. Andrew's Landford response to Bishop Nicholas' initiative: "Let us talk"

1 What is the Personality and Character of your local Church?

Friendly and welcoming to all, and in a good and well established relationship with the other local churches through the Forest Edge Churches Fellowship (FECF). Supportive of and supported by, the local community, despite our physical remoteness from the village – we are cut off from it by the main A36 trunk road.

One of our strengths is that we offer a range of services with different styles of worship: traditional liturgical Eucharist, Family Service and an informal service with guitar led worship.

Like many churches, we are struggling to find new ways of bringing younger people and children into church on a regular basis, though we have a number of families who are part of St. Andrew's on a "semi-detached" basis! We have a small, but very committed and hard working, core congregation (mostly PCC members!).

2 What are the priorities of your local Church?

St Andrew's has a strong awareness that we are not here to focus on ourselves but to serve and connect with the local community. For some time we have however, been struggling with an antiquated heating and lighting system, which has made the church building difficult to use. In 2013 our priorities so far have been to undertake essential modernisation of St. Andrew's involving the complete replacement of these together with redecoration. This is a major undertaking, which has taken an enormous amount of effort on the part of (particularly) the Churchwardens, and is still ongoing.

It has, however, helped us to see new priorities in our future. While St. Andrew's is closed for the work, we have been joining our very good friends in Landford Methodist Church for our Sunday Worship, with services alternating between Anglican and Methodist forms. All concerned have enjoyed the experience, and it has shown us that one of our priorities must be to find ways of continuing to worship & work together. This is "work in progress", but we hope to establish a pattern where joint services continue to help promote God's work in Landford.

Our newly lit and heated church will, hopefully, offer fresh opportunities to extend a welcome, not just to our Methodist friends, but to all. We hope to arrange events that will appeal to the local community, whether through concerts and exhibitions, or through services specially designed to be accessible to those who do not have a church background.

A further priority that has become apparent is the need to help our neighbouring Anglican Parish of St. Peter's, Plaitford. Members of our PCC have met informally with members of St. Peter's, and we are hoping to find ways of sharing administrative burdens with their small number of active members.

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 priorities that we have identified above, especially reaching out to the un-churched in the local community, may make it difficult sometimes for St. Andrew's to take as full a part as might be expected in the work of the Forest and Avon Team. We will need to balance the impact we can have in our own local communities with the need to strengthen our ties with other F & A Parishes (although, of course, Plaitford is one of those).

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

Much of the answer to this question will come in the way our priorities described above develop. Outside the actual programmes of worship, there are a number of joint activities:

- Within Landford, the “Oasis”, (a growing group of Christians crossing the boundaries of denominations and Parishes) has become established.
- With Landford Methodist Church, St. A’s has established a monthly “Coffee Cafe”, which provides an informal meeting place for the community and raises funds for local charities and good causes.
- The Parish Magazine “Horizon” (covering Landford, Plaitford and Bramshaw) has a wide circulation, well beyond Church membership, and serves as a Community magazine.
- The long established FECF (3 Anglican, 2 Methodist and 2 independent Churches) has a regular programme of events, ranging from a Lent Course, with Good Friday Walk of Witness, through to secular events drawing in non-church members of the Community.
- St. Andrew’s runs a popular Annual Quiz night, which brings in a wide range of folk.
- The Church has members involved in many aspects of secular community life - Landford Community Plan, Healthy Landford Group, etc – salt in the mix?

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

There are two aspects from which we need to consider this question, first how do the regular congregation feel about the quality and impact of church life, secondly, how is it perceived by those outside the church. St Andrew’s has maintained steady numbers in the congregation and has benefited from the introduction of less formal worship services and sermon series on a particular theme. There is a desire to grow in our own faith and understanding, and to find ways to reach out to those outside the church. We should pay special attention to those who come for the first time, to encourage them to return and grow with us.

In the wider community St Andrew’s is generally well thought of and receives good levels of support at special events/services such as Christingle, a Christmas Eve Carol Service and occasional exhibitions held in the church. There is a growing use of the Prayer Chain by those outside the church. Alpha Courses and Marriage Courses are supported by small, but dedicated, numbers of people. The ‘Open the Book’ scheme is well received in the local primary school. The Coffee Café (joint venture with Methodist Church) is very popular, as is the Annual Quiz Night. Fundraising appeals for particular needs such as the church spire or the refurbishment of a large stained glass window have been reasonably well supported, even though most of the community only visit us for weddings or funerals!

We should perhaps consider a more pro-active approach to finding out what the community thinks of the church and what more we can do to serve them effectively, eg a Questionnaire on the village web site, in Horizon or in the shops?