

Let us Talk

What is the Personality and Character of your Local Church?

The Parish of Lilliput is situated in the south of the diocese in Poole Deanery. The Church of the Holy Angels dates from 1874 when it was established as a chapel-of-ease to St Peter's Church, Parkstone. Lilliput became a separate parish in 1962. The Church of the Holy Angels has 161 members on the Electoral Roll. Lilliput is one of four parishes in East Poole that collectively are often referred to as the 'peninsular parishes'. Lilliput is geographically small; no boundary is greater than 3 miles. The sea forms our south boundary. Lilliput is one of the most affluent areas in the UK; our category for Fairer Share is currently Category A.

Demographically the 2005 mid-term census indicated the number of electors in our parish as 3048 with the largest single group (29%) being 65+yrs of age. The majority of homes are privately owned. A significant number of homes (22%) are households of one member who is a pensioner. At the same time there are many households (14%) consisting of married couples with dependent children. Most Lilliputians who work are professional people. Many work in Poole or Bournemouth. We are aware that the statistics will have changed with the 2011 Census and are at present in the midst of compiling a new Parish Profile. One thing we already know is that the number of young families moving into our area, largely due to the excellent church schools both here and in our neighbouring parish, has increased.

There is little infrastructure in Lilliput and no central meeting place. However, we do have a yacht club, a sailing club, a golf club, a marina and a hotel. There is also a small parade of local shops where, during a recent parish audit, we noted that a newly opened Coffee Shop has fast become the place for local people to meet. We have one nursing home, Lilliput House, where we have an active ministry. Lewis-manning Hospice is within our parish where we also have an active ministry. We enjoy excellent relationships with our school, Lilliput CE VC First School ('Infant School' from Sept 2013). Our school currently has 360 students on roll. This will reduce to 300 in September when the age of transfer in Poole changes but, with a move from 3 to 4 form entry, the number on roll will increase to 360 by September 2015. Our foundation governors are very actively involved in the life of the school. Our parish priest leads Collective Worship in school on a weekly basis and our children come to church for worship at festivals and other holy days. Our children contribute to our Sunday worship by, for example, making Christingles and Mothering Sunday Posies. In Lent this year the children made our Stations of the Cross. The SIAS Report 2010 rated our school as excellent, commenting on the 'active and very effective links with the local church.' As a consequence of our relationship with our school initiatives such as 'Messy Church' have been very successful here.

The Ministry Team at Holy Angels' consists of the Priest-in-Charge, six Lay Pastoral Assistants, our Youth and Children's Worker and the two Churchwardens. We have three part-time paid members of staff; our Parish Administrator, our Director of Music and our Youth and Children's Worker. We currently have four members of our church family on the Growing Leaders Course.

At Holy Angels' we describe our churchmanship as middle of the road Anglican; welcoming and hospitable to all. Our average Sunday attendance in 2012 was 133 (109 adults, 24 children). Our worship is Eucharistic with Holy Communion (BCP) at 8am and a sung Eucharist (CW Order 1) at 10am or 11.15am every Sunday. We have a large, robed, choir of 23 members, 14 adults and 9 children. We recognize that not everyone, especially the non-churched and those very new to church life, find Eucharistic worship to be accessible. For this reason we have introduced a monthly non-Eucharistic Family Service at 10am followed by a sung Eucharist at 11.15am. The former has led to an increased number of children at worship on those Sundays representing approximately 33% of the gathered congregation. We have also introduced a quarterly Songs of Praise and Tea for the elderly and hire a specially equipped bus for this

purpose. In addition to our Morning Services we have Evening Worship every Sunday. The form of this varies from Choral Evensong to Taizé Services to Services of Healing and Wholeness and Compline.

Our children's work in Lilliput is vibrant. We enjoy good relationships with our Brownie and Guide Groups who join us for parade services at some festivals. Our Mothers' Union runs 'Cherubs', a popular and over-subscribed Parent, Carer and Toddler Group on Monday mornings. We have a thriving Sunday School which meets on 3 or 4 Sundays in the month in term-time during the 10am Parish Communion Service. Nine young people form our Junior Choir and we have a large group (12) of young altar servers. Messy Church meets on the first Tuesday of each month in term time and we have an as yet small Youth Group. We have a part-time Youth and Children's Worker (40hrs per month) and a large group of volunteers who help with leadership of our children's work.

What are the priorities of your parish?

Three years ago we established a 5 year Development Plan with priorities established by the PCC. Each year since then we have held 2 'special' PCC Meetings to review what has been achieved and to re-consider our priorities in the light of this whilst taking into account current circumstances. These have been outlined each year at the APCM.

Our current priorities are:

Spirituality and Discipleship

To develop House Groups which meet all year round as opposed to just in Advent and Lent.

To offer an evangelism course such as 'Christianity Explored.'

To grow and develop our Youth Group.

Worship

To explore alternative forms of worship such as Café Church and worship for fathers and children.

To develop Youth led worship.

Leadership

To continue to Grow Leaders and encourage leadership in worship, youth and children's work.

Mission

To use our new Hall Kitchen to provide a Lunch Club for our local community.

To establish closer links with our local infrastructure.

To encourage more couples to marry in church

Finance

To continue to promote responsible stewardship and commitment to regular planned giving. To generate more income in order to reduce our annual deficit.

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

There are 2 things:

1) We would like to meet our priority of establishing a Lunch Club (and ideally a summer holiday club) for the elderly and isolated in our parish.

2) We would like to work with our new Youth and Children's Worker to determine whether we could begin a Fresh Expression of Church for Youth in our Parish.

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

1) At the (very) local level

In East Poole the churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic and URC) have tended to work well together, particularly during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and on 5th Sundays when we hold a joint Evening Service. This year we held a joint Lent Course on Sunday Evenings in Lent which some of our churches took part in. In practice, however, joint ventures have tended only to attract those who are

already committed to working in this way and even then enthusiasm for this collaboration has waned in the last 18 months. It would be helpful to consider whether this is because we need to explore new and different ways of working together and/or because our churches are so busy that anything beyond our own church and parish is 'a task too far.'

In terms of collaborative working between Anglican parishes in East Poole (and just beyond) in which Holy Angels' has participated there has been some good work recently with a joint Alpha Course led by Bishop Graham, several of our parishes worked collaboratively to offer a Marriage Preparation Course, several of our parishes worshipped together at Dawn on Easter Day on the beach at Sandbanks. (The latter has grown from initially one parish being involved to three and this year we were joined by ecumenical partners too). The clergy of the four peninsular parishes and St Peter's parish have, until interregnums temporarily diminished our number, met every two months for breakfast, prayer and mutual support. Our challenge, as with working ecumenically, is a lack of enthusiasm on the part of many members of our churches to attend worship or take part in any activities other than in their own church.

A few parishes have, in the past, worked together to prepare candidates for Confirmation. This worked well, especially where a church had perhaps one or two candidates and may well have deferred preparation until the following year.

It can be difficult, as a small parish, to work in isolation. In terms of Fresh Expressions of Church It would be worth exploring whether local collaboration might enable us to take greater risks.

2) At Deanery Level

Poole Deanery is a large deanery, the largest in the diocese. This presents challenges when it comes to working together; distance between parishes and, sometimes, the number of candidates. However, what has worked well for us has been a deanery LPA Training Course which members of Holy Angels' have attended and, more recently, a deanery wide 'Growing Leaders' Course which members of our church have also attended. In both cases the candidates have expressed enthusiasm for the fact that they're learning with and from members of other churches.

It is also useful to offer training days on a deanery basis. Poole Deanery does this for LPAs in addition to the diocesan training that is offered.

Something that has for a long time worked well for us in Lilliput (and our neighbours at St Peter's Parkstone) is that we both employ the same person as our Parish Administrator. In our case this is not a joint appointment, we employ her separately, but it is possible to envisage that churches could perhaps think in terms of joint appointments especially where it might be easier to attract candidates if more hours/time were available.

Something that has worked particularly well in Poole has been the establishment of an ecumenical Messy Church Network. Many of our churches have Messy Church. All are encouraged to be members of the local network which meets once per quarter to share experiences and ideas. From this has come several training events led by, for example, people such as Lucy Moore.

3) At Diocesan Level

At Holy Angels' we have worked on a broader basis than the local with the appointment of our previous Youth and Children's Worker. He worked part-time for us in Lilliput and part-time for the parish of Alderholt. Although sharing him as a resource when the parishes were a fair distance from each other wasn't always easy for him, it worked well for us in that we had an excellent person who we couldn't have

afforded to employ on a full-time basis. It may be the case that such collaborative working between parishes is a way forward for parishes such as ours that cannot commit to full-time contracts.

It is good that training days and events are offered on a diocesan basis. We have encouraged our LPAs, Church wardens, Treasurer and PCC Secretary to attend some of these. The only problem is that some training events are so far from Poole that the distance restricts who may attend, especially where an event is offered during an evening.

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

One straightforward way of doing this in terms of the impact of the church 'beyond the church' is to ask people beyond the church what they know about the church. Such questioning forms part of our preparation of a new Parish Profile where each member of our PCC has walked a road or two of our parish 'seeing' what is going on and has (or will have) also interviewed 2 people about the life of our parish and the life of the church.

An audit of the ways in which the church serves the community, in terms of parent and Toddler groups, Lunch Clubs etc, is a specific and quantifiable way to assess if church life is making an impact beyond the church.

Church growth numerically can be a way to assess the impact that church life has had upon individuals who have come to 'try us out.' Put quite simply: 'have they gone or have they stayed?' In Lilliput we prepare an annual review of attendance which looks at numerical growth both in terms of adults and children. This is distinct from the Fairer Share Count in April/May or the data we provide for Statistics for Mission.

A further way we can assess the quality and impact of church life is the extent to which those who initially seek us out for Pastoral Offices then respond to our invitation to join us for worship and, in some cases, enter more fully into the life of the church. In Lilliput we have several ways of doing this. We have special, usually annual, services for a) all those who have been baptised in the past few years, b) couples who have been married in the past few years and/or who are to be married in the forthcoming year, c) a service to remember departed loved ones in November. We try to measure the extent to which some of these people have entered more fully into the life of the church. This would include, for example, more regular attendance at Family Services and a growth in discipleship including a request for Confirmation and admission to Holy Communion. It may also be expressed through a desire to be enrolled on the Electoral Roll, through willingness to serve as members of PCC or to assist with church 'events' or to undertake leadership.

There are, of course, many in our parish who do not seek us out for Pastoral Offices. One way we may assess the quality and impact of the church's life upon them (in addition to the questions of a Parish Audit) is to consider whether they are touched by the life of the church at all and, if not, whether the church is prepared to go to them rather than expect them to come to us. At Holy Angels' we have recognised that unless we seek to reach people where they are the church's life will not have any impact. One way we measure this is through the extent we reach people by being church differently. This at

present is for us through Messy Church. Our Messy Church is a discreet congregation, a few of whom also attend church on Sundays. Our average attendance at Messy Church is 75 including leaders.

In terms of the impact of church life upon those who have been members of the church for some years this can be more difficult to assess. For some members of our church, this may be measured by their willingness to become more involved in the life of the church than had previously been the case. For example at Holy Angels' the average age of those serving on PCC, including one of the Church Wardens, has decreased significantly in the last 3 years as some of our younger members have come to the fore to undertake greater responsibility. The impact could also be measured by the extent to which members of the church have grown in discipleship through willingness to belong to house groups, or take part in quiet days or go on retreat. This would be true of a few members of our church. However, many members of our church, especially our more senior members, did not grow up with such things and have no particular desire to do so now. Some church members may so do in Lent but not at other times. With them a more realistic way to assess the impact of church life is through their faithfulness at 'sticking with it' through good and ill and sticking with it in a committed way, not simply turning up for worship and going home afterwards but actively taking part on committees, flower rotas, church cleaning etc. Church may, for some, be a club, but this is not true of many.