

Oldbury Benefice

Bishop of Salisbury's Talk – Let's Talk

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

Friendly, outward looking, involved with initiatives such as:-

Two primary schools, T4All and Little Fishes – (Two rural Fresh Expressions of church.)

Rural location of the churches encourages a shared leadership

Although we have tried to encourage the younger people we have not succeeded. There is an absence of youngsters taking part in the services even when they are especially aimed at that age group. The church building can appear to be isolated, cold and inaccessible. The question was asked "could we somehow encourage the children into the building"?

We felt that on the whole Sunday "as a special day" tradition had gone and there was so much more competition nowadays for the use of time on a Sunday.

Access to three of our churches, namely Calstone, Compton Bassett & Yatesbury is quite difficult especially for older people who we felt chose to stay away due to these difficulties.

Possibly a symptom of being rural churches is that we are too conservative and timid – very English.

2. What are the priorities of your local church?

To meet the needs of the changing culture and work out what the community needs with a view to offer and then give the Gospel

To be outward looking and to meet, engage and get to know the people in our villages.

To remain solvent and continue to fill the posts of treasurers and churchwardens.

The mission would be to get the message out to the people whilst praying for them; not just getting people into the church and being content with that.

We meet all of the needs not just those of the baptisms, marriages and burials as a benefice.

To have a growing ministry (lay and ordained)

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 overall opinion was no, we have lots of things going on and if we change one thing we may lose out somewhere else.

We already have the church and community working together; people can make choices about where they attend church as we have a mixture and variety of times and types of services available. It was felt however that in some instances this may contribute to attendees not having a heart for their own church and that the five churches should join together to more to discuss this.

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

As a benefice we work well together sharing good practice with the initiatives we have currently running i.e. Little Fishes, T4All and the Community Chest. For example we could have a short service with a screen, sermon and Lords Prayer using pictures accompanied by music at a Little Fishes session.

It was felt that we do not do as well as a Deanery although we do have a good relationship with Calne.

Ecumenical relationships with churches in Calne are good and we encourage people in the villages of other denominations to participate in our worship.

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

By its growth in depth of faith, and numbers across the spectrum not just by those who attend church.

By acknowledging the prayer meetings, healing sessions, home study groups and Bible study groups.

It was felt that the measure was not necessarily measurable in numbers but in the change within peoples lives.