

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, PITTON "LET US TALK"

What is the personality and character of your local church?

WELCOMING AND INDEPENDENT

Rooted in Christ, sustained by prayer St. Peter's, Pitton, is a church community committed to offering a warm welcome and a listening ear to all. More than 10 percent of the adults in the village are regular members of the congregation, even more help in practical ways to keep the church looking well cared for. When the local chapel closed we formed an alliance with the Methodist circuit and we host a monthly Methodist service to our mutual benefit. The majority of the congregation stay for after-service refreshments and to enjoy the fellowship.

What are the priorities of your church?

PEOPLE AND GIVING

Our priority is people of all ages, churched and unchurched, that through our care and love they may come to know the love of God afresh or recognise Him for the very first time. Although we have financial difficulties we have pledged to continue tithing our income to three charities – one international, one national and one local. We support the Trussell Trust by collecting food. How can we not give when our lives are so gracefully blessed by the love and generosity of Christ? We assist our clergy team in whatever ways we can to lighten their load.

Is there one thing you would like to take on in the coming year?

OUTREACH

In 2012 we conducted a successful stewardship campaign which increased our committed giving by 45 percent (in spite of this and for the first time, we are unlikely to be able to pay our 'Share' in full). In 2013 we wish to concentrate more time on home visits, pastoral care and staging events that are attractive to people who, for whatever reason, do not choose to be part of our church community. We wish to place less emphasis on 'generating income' and more on 'mission'. It is our belief that if we make people our priority the money will follow. A church that spends most of its time and energy trying to raise money to keep itself going is not attractive. People with an active and visible mission are.

We have already forged close links with the school through taking assemblies, introducing the 'Open the Book' initiative and having occasional joint services either in the school or in the church. For the last two years we have held a popular carol singing evening in our local pub. Each year we hold a 'Carnival Service' in the village field as well as a picnic outing for families. In a phrase 'mission not money' is our priority for 2013.

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

RADICAL REFORM OF THE WAY IN WHICH MINISTRY IS FINANCED

We believe that the Diocese should explore alternative ways in which to finance the cost of supporting stipendiary ministry in our churches. Those churches that engage in outreach and actively seek to grow should be encouraged rather than penalised by an increase in the Share allocation as they attract more people. Our community is largely made up of retired people and the younger ones, in common with much of the country, are stretched to afford local housing and we cannot repeatedly return to them for still more money.

ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATION

It is important that we have sufficient funds to pay for adequate administrative back up, otherwise we are in danger of ending up drowning in paper work and becoming frustrated by poor communications across the Team. We need to avoid becoming depleted, too 'thinly spread' and spending precious mission time in meetings. We would like to see our clergy freed up to manifest their particular gifts more fully within the community.

EDUCATION

The St. Aldhelm certificate is an excellent initiative which is affordable and much appreciated. Such encouragement for 'further education' is most helpful.

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

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMITMENT

We seek to engage ever more deeply with Christ, each other and our community and to be recognised and respected as a group of people who look outwards into the world and actively support those in need. Our commitment is to maintain an enthusiastic and joyful approach to our faith so that St. Peter's continues to be a place where people are happy to worship. Someone recently commented: "I don't know what it is you people have – but I would really like some of it!" We feel valued and supported by our village and that is important to us. Sorry, we haven't been able to produce a pie chart! Mission in rural areas is best summed up as 'One Heart at a Time' – costly on time but not on finances.

Under the leadership of Nils Bersweden we have a wonderful clergy team who work tirelessly to support us and inspire us. They deserve and have our love, our gratitude and our admiration.

26th April 2013