

I attach herewith the response from the Savernake Team to Bishop Nicholas' questions with many apologies for missing the deadline but there was a communications mix-up, with Team and Deanery each thinking the other had sent it. This is to be read in conjunction with the Deanery response to question 5. Best wishes, Gerald Osborne, RD

### **Response from Savernake Team to Bishop Nicholas's "Let us Talk" questions.**

#### **1. What is the 'Personality and Character' of your local church?**

The Savernake Team comprises eleven village parishes in the north-eastern corner of the diocese. The vision expressed in the recently composed Team Profile was to be

**'a thriving Church, prepared to take risks, do new things, spot opportunities and foster a committed enthusiasm in mission to all sections of society'**

And the Team itself is described as comprising 'disparate but enthusiastic worshipping communities.'

Again, taking the Profile as a basis, across the Team there is a wide spectrum of worship patterns and styles, from the informal to the more traditional, and a wide range of theology. Maintaining a mixture and variety of provision across the Team is seen by the parishes as of paramount importance.

Whatever the form or style of Christian witness, there is an openness in all the parishes to fresh approaches and new ideas. Many parishes are experimenting with alternative forms of worship, adapting to change by introducing Sunday Clubs for Children, Men's or Ladies' Breakfasts, Quiet Days, House Groups, lunch-time services and more lay-led services. There is a variety of Christian sharing and teaching in the schools, activities with toddler groups, 'Faith and Fitness' (a ladies' group) and worship in local sheltered housing.

Through this variety of styles and patterns, this balancing of the traditional with the innovative, the Savernake Team aims to express a living faith – at home with the familiar, the tried and true, yet always willing to explore new directions and meet new challenges.

#### **2. What are the priorities of your local church?**

**Young People.** In recent years many of the villages have witnessed an influx of young families. Changing work patterns and improved infrastructure have resulted in a sometimes dramatic lowering of the age profile in the parishes. Responding to this change and reaching out to these age groups is seen by all the parishes as essential to our shared vision of the future. This includes developing and strengthening the churches' connection with the five primary schools in the parishes and encouraging the growth of the youth group in one of the churches.

**Community.** Each parish has its unique connection with the community in which it is set and a desire to strengthen that connection. Churches often initiate projects to build up community relationships as well as playing their part in events organised by the secular community. Examples are as wide-ranging as a Game Fair, a 'Street Market', a weekly simple lunch open to anyone in the village and a Classic Car Show. One parish runs a successful concert series. Many churches comment on the large congregations at festivals, particularly at Christmas time, and look for ways of developing that.

There is a growing concern to find practical ways of helping the disadvantaged, both in our villages and further afield.

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

Up until recently the Savernake Team has not had a dedicated Team Administrator. That is about to change, and we are currently clarifying the job description.

2011 and 2012 were years of change for the Savernake Team. Three long standing members of our stipendiary clergy team retired. The Team rose to the challenge of the resulting vacancies with real enthusiasm. There are now two new members of stipendiary clergy: a Team Rector, and a Team Vicar. It is an exciting time.

What the Team must take on and develop over the next year – is a settling down, a bedding in of new relationships, patterns and styles. Learning to trust and grow in faith with one another, living out our Christian witness and fellowship.

Probably the most frequently expressed need from the parishes is: new ways of reaching out to, and working with, young people. The Team aims to develop its connection with young families, teenagers and children.

**4. Are there ways in which we can work together with neighbouring churches to achieve more?**

If we're not working together, we're not a Team. The Savernake Team (at its best!) is about collaboration, sharing and growing. The parishes recognize there is always work to do, there are always improvements to be made.

The Savernake Team is a collection of village parishes that are used to working together and in partnership. The Team regularly holds Team-wide, united services: the Easter Vigil, walks of witness, Songs of Praise, and the Woman's World Day of Prayer, and so on.

Generally the logic of Team works well here: congregations are happy to travel to different churches across the patch – different parishes have different strengths. A recent Celtic Evensong in one of the churches was extremely well attended by worshippers from all across the Team. Other churches, from the very small villages, rely on drawing from this Team-wide congregation.

The parishes continue to work through what 'Team' means. Parishes are learning to collaborate more and more – sharing a Sunday Club for the children across a number of parishes, for instance.

The parishes work well with each other at an administrative level. The Team Council is a vital and prayerful talking shop.

The Team identity could be strengthened by opening and fostering new lines of communication, sharing information. The internet could help here, a resource we need to use more effectively.

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

This question has been answered by the Pewsey Deanery on behalf of both the Savernake Team and the Vale of Pewsey Team together.