

The Parish of St Mary, Stalbridge

1. What is the Personality and Character of our church?

It was felt that the church was welcoming but could be improved. There are many small groups who have different objectives and do not communicate effectively. Some groups even rather backward looking. We might be seen as rather traditional, we need lightening up. A happy church which feels 'safe', maybe too safe.

2. What are the priorities of your local church?

To get more 'bums on seats' and encourage the younger generations. There is a lack of real objectives – more people needed but no idea of how to get them in (We have one service particularly for the young once a month and thanks to individual invitations it is proving popular). Mission and outreach is a priority as is paying share.

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)?

We need to integrate more into village life in a physical and spiritual way. Possibly move one service a month to the village hall. One group suggested a café church/Sunday school for adults. A new toilet in the church will allow more to be done using the church and the parish room. Liven up a service with group singing without the organ.

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

In Benefice services use people from each parish in the liturgy, not just the host church. Take a service, not communion, out into the village – perhaps in the village hall. Give out notices during services to ensure that the congregation know what is currently going on. Encourage youngsters to come to an activity group, with mums and give some gentle information about what happens in church and the services. Increase social functions and activities, not necessarily fundraising e.g. Church awaydays, shared meals, recitals, musical get togethers, Sound of Music sing a long, Gospel choir. PCC to meet more often and maybe church members too. Cut down on services by having only one on a Sunday, a Benefice service, regularly each month. (At present we do this when there is a fifth Sunday in the month).

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

Find out how many new people are joining the church and the attitude of those already here (pessimistic)? Send out a small questionnaire round the village to find out how we are perceived and to include a tick box if you want to know more and we will reply. Focus groups – youth club, WI, toddler group and Primary School.