

St. Lawrence Church, Stratford-Sub-Castle

'Let us Talk' Feedback March 2013

The following summary was compiled by Churchwardens and the Vicar following a parish discussion after the Sunday service on 24th March, and a number of emails received from parishioners following an article in our Parish Magazine. The words in italics are direct quotes from members of the congregation.

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

St. Lawrence is *physically on the edge of Salisbury but with the ambience of a country parish church*. We are the smaller of a two church Benefice.

We are a traditional but *not stuffy or backward looking church. Steadfast in spirit with a determination to move forward*.

We have a view of the future which we approach with optimism. Our congregation determines the character and personality of our church in that the community served is largely retired and generally in the second half of their lives. This means that we are not perceived as 'trendy' but we are very *open to new ideas* and are always trying new things to broaden our attractiveness as a church community.

We think our church works hard at being *welcoming, enthusiastic, caring and non-judgmental*. We are well integrated into the village of Stratford sub Castle which largely comprises the Parish. One parishioner commented '*We have great strength in depth*'. We have a well organised congregation full of talents and gifts which are readily shared for the good of all.

Key words: liturgical, open to new ideas, community minded, optimistic, welcoming.

2 What are the priorities of your local church?

We have a Parish Plan which provides useful guidance for our activities and which in particular provides us with the assurance that our finances remain in good order so that we can apply ourselves to improving inter-generational integration with a view to increasing the proportion of younger people who can play an active part in the Christian community in the Parish.

Having had 8 adult candidates Confirmed this year, one of our key priorities is Christian nurture and discipleship.

We are experiencing *steady growth* which is encouraging. We need to work at enabling newer worshippers to feel a deeper sense of belonging in the coming year and ensuring sustainable pastoral care.

Some comments on priorities:

'Building fellowship in the community...listening and responding.' *'developing our growing work with children and families'* *'to be more outward looking rather than inward looking'* *'enhance church works of art'* *'connect with church life more widely.*

Key words: financial stability, inter-generational, Christian nurture, sense of belonging, pastoral care.

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

We plan to build on the increased participation of the younger people in the congregation, focusing particularly on connecting with children and their parents but also by following up on the opportunities presented by baptisms and marriages to maintain and improve contact with our church.

Key words: reflect all ages, connect, grow

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

The Deanery Synod and Church Together in Salisbury are seen to be ways of promoting and a flow of ideas and mutual understanding and support.

Within the village, we think that 'Away Days' to visit local organisations, such as The Trussell Trust and the local Wiltshire Wild Life Trust, provide opportunities to create stronger links with parishioners and others. Similarly, invitations to the great religious festivals and occasions like the Harvest Supper/lunch provide additional opportunities to increase the spread of the Word.

Key words: build links, invite, share

5 How can we best measure the quality and impact of Church Life

Clearly on a local basis, the steady growth in numbers attending the church services and other church organised events are the principal measure of both parameters.

A desire for more opportunities to pray, learn and grow in faith and love is an indicator of quality and impact of church life. One parishioner said *'quality of fellowship & love'*.

'If we are reconcilers in the wider community in a variety of ways, that is a measure of our impact.'

As far as the City is concerned, we think that Street Pastor Activities and the proposed all night café can and will impact favourably on the life of Salisbury and its young people.

Key words: steady growth, prayer, being reconcilers...those who love.

Associate Priest: The Rev'd Tessa Mann.

Churchwardens: Mrs. Heather Balston & Mr. Arnold Harrison