



Introduction

The PCC considered some of the five questions raised by the Bishop's 'Let us talk' initiative at a discussion day attended by members of the PCC and LCCs. This was led by Lucinda Herklots and John Kilbee, and looked broadly at questions about our Mission, and Stewardship needed to underpin this. This was a wide ranging discussion, from which 6 priority areas were identified, and it was agreed that these should be further discussed and reduced to one or two priorities to work on over the coming year. The APCM was asked to contribute to this, and to address the Bishop's question, 'Is there ONE thing you would like to take on or develop this year? The comments given below reflect the range of views expressed and the PCC and its working groups will now need to identify which areas to focus our efforts on in the coming months.

Notes taken from the Parish Away morning – Saturday 23rd February 2013 at the Grove Building, Mere.

1. Groups were asked to discuss the following questions (arising from the Bishop's 'Let us talk' consultation)

What is the church really like here in Upper Stour?

This is your chance to think about and discuss:

- a) **What is the “personality & character” of your local church?**

Responses: Forthright; Demanding; Small sect/s; Builders of community;
Crossing age ranges and classes; inclusive; Active; Elderly/Mature;
Friendly; Beautiful; Middle class – sense of duty – Sunday only?;
Nice building; resilient; welcoming; Hardworking; Mutually supportive.

- b) **How can we best measure the quality and impact of church life?**

Responses: Participation e.g. music/flowers on a larger scale; Prayer Tree 100 p/m in Stourton; Congregation size/ER; Finance – how it's split – who wants to give; Heathen helpers; Age profile; Service pattern; No. of occasional services; Ability to share information on local need.

2. **Challenges and Opportunities in Upper Stour**

O.P.E.R.A.! Lucinda Herklots invited us to produce some ideas for further action and to prioritise these using the following method. Post-it notes were handed to all members and they were invited to take part in the following process:

- Own ideas – O
- Pared ideas – P
- Exchange ideas – E
- Rate ideas – R
- Action – A – who picks up what.

Parish of Upper Stour – Response to ‘Let us talk’

Each table therefore spent some time following this process and then the result was a number of clusters of ideas as follows:

- **SERVICES:** Is sung Eucharist every Sunday a hindrance to enlarging the congregation? Individual churches with different services and identities. Does Back to Church Sunday or Ride and Stride work without connection with Harvest Festival (or similar)? Review service pattern.
- **COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** Start a Coffee Shop (can turn into a little business). Ask people for any local needs they perceive. Increased focus beyond the community which can relate to (e.g. Trussell Trust). More involvement for different age groups in the community, both church and non church goers. Lonely: fellowship lunches on Sunday (possibly loneliest day of the week) - In homes after church build bonds – in community gatherings. Meet the needs of families – holiday childcare – babysitting – support Parenting Course. Marginalised ‘Open Porch’ shelter and sanctuary for the lost. Community Car Share for occasional use, sponsored and cared for by church. Are there already good ways of meeting new people to the village?
- **RESOURCES (BUILDINGS & FINANCES):** Be brave in our decision making for the future – can we afford 4 churches? Have friends of St. Martin’s, Zeals Society. Raising enough money to pay our share – let alone anything else. Everybody pay so much a week. Should the churches/ buildings be used more? If so how? Lunches and markets, parties??? Find a way of rewarding giving by Standing Order.
- **FAMILIES AND CHILDREN:** More children/young people in church activities by better links with families we are directly in contact with. Build on children’s workshops/messy church idea. How can we captive the young families to be part of the congregation and involve older people in the village? A successful Messy Church initiative for families with a supportive team to run it (maybe midweek). More services involving children which (hopefully) will bring their parents into church. More variety in services.
- **DEVELOP MUSIC INVOLVEMENT:** Develop a church music group. Grow the choir – encourage young people (instruments).
- **POSITIVE COMMUNICATION:** Be able to be more trusting of each other within the existing church community – perhaps be more honest, reading to sort out differences. Enjoy our time together – develop a more positive feeling about ‘church’ including the wider church. Inclusive fundraising events that we enjoy. Publicity: consider impact of activities and celebrate publicly what we do well. Say thank you to celebrate what we have been enabled to achieve.

It was suggested we would need to further prioritise these ideas and then choose teams to pursue them on behalf of the P.C.C.

Post-it comments received from APCM held at Bourton school hall on 18th April 2013, with reference to the 6 priorities identified at the ‘Awayday’: they were asked the question, Is there ONE thing you would like to take on or develop this year?

Group 1

- To develop worship for families (change time?)

Group 2

- To provide and develop worship for 0 – 18 year olds.

Group 3

- Activity to appeal to families (e.g. Café Church)

Group 4

- More involvement of all 4 churches together

Group 5

- Vary services to attract others & increase the congregation (e.g. Guest speakers; pet services)

Group 6

- Combine activities to maximise involvement: (e.g. Family Service, Ride and Stride, Wellie walk, Harvest Festival/lunch, Back2Church, Organ project)

Group 7.

- More variety of service.
- Too much emphasis on money instead of welcoming people to worship
- Encourage more people into church and church activities