

**"LET US TALK"**  
**St Laurence, Upwey**

**Notes of a meeting held on 11 March 2013 at 32 Elwell Street, Upwey.**

**Present: The Revd Richard Simmons, Jane Brochner, Pru Bollam, John Fill, Jan Kimball-Smith, Alex Landsbert, Terry Landsbert, Dilys Scott, Betty Sutcliffe and Paul Sutcliffe.**

**1. What is the personality and character of your local church?**

A Christian presence in our village; an 'iconic' village church below the Dorset Ridgeway, much visited and attracting people for rites of passage; reasonably traditional; slightly introspective (through lack of energetic younger members willing to take on activities and responsibilities), but friendly and welcoming, with a sense of fun and humour, and without cliques (the word 'inclusive' was used). A variety of ministry is encouraged, with varied participation in worship by both clergy and laity. The average size of the congregation is 40, and its age has remained unchanged for 20 years at 60 plus, but with very few children over that period of time, not helped by the demography of the area and the lack of facilities for a separate children's group. Upwey is on the northern fringe of Weymouth, part rural and part suburban. To the west of the Dorchester Road (which used to be very busy), Upwey is mainly a retirement and holiday cottage village. To the east of this road the population is more mixed and has felt very little connection with the old village for a long time. The main road is now much quieter since the Relief Road has been built, but there has been little significant change in perception so far.

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

Our priority is to present the Gospel by serving our main catchment population (which tends to be retired), keeping the church open every day. In this, we hope at least to maintain our numbers; to focus on lowering the average age by offering a warm and tangible welcome to newcomers to the area; to encourage more participation by families with young children; to raise the profile of the local Christian community with coffee mornings and social events; and to foster connections with all people in our area, including Christians who attend churches elsewhere.

**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).**

Extend our Christian presence more widely within the parish, particularly in the section to the east of Dorchester Road, by, for example: making greater use of the Memorial Hall, as well as the Old School Hall; and revitalising the Welcome Scheme for newcomers to our parish. We are working towards effective action in this area - which will include possible website identification of house sales, and an update of the distribution details of the regular newsletter delivered to all houses. This may be more a matter of better organisation and may not necessitate having to abandon other activities.

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

There could be better communication between the PCC and the congregation by publishing a summary of the proceedings. We welcome the proposals for an enlarged benefice within the next three years, and will continue to support the new Magazine which aims to cover the whole proposed area. We should continue to support the Street Pastors in Weymouth; make our support for the Lantern more effective by using Gift Aid envelopes; continue practical support for Christian Aid; raise the profile of Fair Trade in our church; and encourage the congregation to support the new local Food Bank, taking our contributions to our local collection point at St Francis, Littlemoor.

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

Measurement is virtually impossible, but the hubbub of conversation when coffee is served after church is perhaps a useful indicator of quality! The village is always happy to support the church when it runs social and fund-raising events - these events raise relatively little money but are a vital point of contact with local non-churchgoers. Again, the impact is not really measurable; we do not know what seeds we sow, they are known only to God!