Feedback from “We Pray, we Serve, but are we Growing?”
Diocesan Synod, 16 February 2019

1. What is God growing where you are?

- Positive community spirit and involvement
- Youth Work
- Sunday School
- Nativity Service
- Messy Church
- Fresh Expressions
- Welcome and hospitality; Fresh Expressions
- Depth of Faith increasing in congregations
- Confirmation as a significant part of an individual’s faith journey
- Growth of Lay Worship Leaders
- Lay Ministry. Need for creative deployment though
- The Bridge Project: Salisbury
- A weekly half hour family service
- Spiritual Leadership of Headteachers
- C of E does things well!
- Church and Schools relationship
- Relationships, community, schools’ work
- Church Schools are a gift, but we lose them. Will primary schools sow the seeds in church schools - but they have “done” church and rarely attend services
- Young families, Cafe, Alpha, Mothers and Toddlers
- Toddler Group/ Church x 6 a year, run by Mums 4 Mums
- Toddler Group spin off to after school groups. Spin off to Breakfast Church and Baptisms
- Work with families (Breakfast Church); across parishes; ecumenical relationship
- Using the strengths and resources we have
- Communities of Relationship
- Community Lunch once a year
- Engagement with community
- Breakfast Church, Fresh Expressions, growth in the community eg running a minibus service
- Men’s Meeting, Women’s Meeting (Breakfast), working with disabled
- Minster as a civic centre; wide range of gatherings (not all religious!)
- God is growing vocations and ministries including “lay lay” ministries
- Locations
- Growth from geography - new
- Confidence in Outreach
- Pewsey – come and see Lenten Outreach
- Midweek communion in Wool grown – location change; social element
- Vocations – fresh and developing existing ministries
- Growing in depth through learning, eg Marlborough Bite Size Learning
- Bible Study growth – not just for Advent!
- Aldhelm Courses
- Growing community not Church
- Youth Choir with Group Leader
- Bible Society, Bible Book Club
- Open the Book growth in schools
- Life Exhibition – 550 pupils, 150 adults in St John’s Pewsey
- Raising awareness of Modern Day Slavery amongst MU members in the Diocese
- Companionship
- New people to the Diocese
- Using community to bring people together; how can we better serve the poor?
- Calne – Bible Study group; creating space to talk about spiritual things; mums and toddlers; Cakes & Company – older people together for cake and chat
- Links with the local C of E primary school
- Community Organiser – mustn’t stop there! Engaging Faith Group
- Opening the Church (not for services)
- Commuter enclave
- Not just Sunday worship
2. What are the inhibitors of growth?

- Lack of resources, thinking we don’t have enough
- Aging church, low numbers, relying on the same people
- Small numbers of helpers getting overstretched
- Reluctance to change and engage
- Buildings, clergy, lack of resources, unwillingness to change
- Initiators taking people with them; joining in brings growth; how do you start a movement?
- Growth restricted by expectation to “pay” its way – allow 15-20 years to develop
- Growth of the membership culture
- Perceived lack of engagement with real issues
- Science / Reason v Faith
- Bad use of language, using words that exclude people
- Negative attitudes
- Loss of faith and constant bad publicity for organised religions worldwide, “the world would be a better place without any religion”
- Poor communication with non-churchgoers and the younger (25 – 45) age group who are also a very busy group with restricted time due to long commutes
- Human sexuality
- Fatigue
- Lack of confidence; fear
- Fear of change out of comfort zone
- Hard to bring everyone together in unity / team working
- Control; reluctance to delegate
- Lack of energy; leaders and co-workers to run things?
- Insularity – not looking at what is already going on around us
- Constant pressure to grow Church, not Kingdom
- Sunday is a busy day for families
- Distractions on Sunday, people are busy
- How families use time – or being “busy”
- Parochialism; locked doors on our churches
- Social Media is shrinking local community feeling
- Implications of proliferation of bureaucracy (eg DAC approval of facilities)
- People don’t hear good news stories
- Busy-ness
- History! Age
- Psychological boundaries
- Competition from other churches
- Location and lack of accessibility
- Second home owners hitting communities
- Facilities, lack of confidence, human resources (lack of)
- Fear of rejection of ideas - humiliation
- Retirement enclave
- Lost confidence in the Bible and in the Gospel
- Lukewarm-ness about Church
- Challenge of maintaining the old while developing the new (core v Fresh Expressions)
- Contemporary culture = more anti-faith
- We focus too much on negatives (eg reducing numbers) – not the positives
- Relativism and post-truth
- Lack of challenge
- Level of commitment
- Family responsibilities and dysfunction
- Fear – which means that church members don’t talk about the Church to people who are not part of their congregation
- Fear of growth; fear of call for a deeper faith; strong take up of new worship for unchurched, strengthen traditional worship; invitations to serve in educational communities
- Loss of vision inhibits growth – “where there is no vision the people perish”
- Barriers to welcome; we need to change not just the newcomers
- Lack of volunteers
- Shrinking culture of long-term volunteering, or worship, styles
- Not sustaining the pattern - encourage people to bring their gifts, see where they want to contribute
- Dislike of change; organist and hymn choice
- Structure of the C of E; people’s perception of the C of E as unwelcoming and always after money; failure to make disciples; poor work with children and young people
3. What encourages growth?

- Creating and grasping opportunities
- Celebrating successes – sharing stories
- Celebrating signs of success and thanking people
- Relationships and co-operation
- Being positive
- Leadership
- Arrival of new blood; new leadership
- Imagination
- Communication
- Inspiring models
- Getting out there
- Equipping people to have the conversations with the non-church community
- Being clear about what we need to do
- Do few things well, know when to stop doing things (prune)
- Don’t be afraid to try something again (even if it failed before)
- Specialists who can attract and retain youth
- Transitioning nursery groups into regular worship
- Challenge
- More modern music and musicians
- Better communication externally to non-churchgoers
- Theology; willingness to welcome difference
- Connected up schools’ work – youth, secondary, primary
- Community, pastoring, food
- Working together with our local Methodist Church, sharing understanding and worship
- Moving out of church into hall
- Accepting of difference
- Remembrance
- Bible study and devotion
- Christmas services
- Contacts and goodwill
- Middle-aged people becoming Christians
- Welcome and openness
- Get out of the Church to where the people are
- Using our church venues better, eg for concerts
- Showing how we spend our resources (people and cash) on good things, eg Church Schools, good work and ministry
- Positivity – try, plan, succeed
- Street Pastors, 18-25 years age group
- Growing relationships
- Better communication externally to non-churchgoers
- Being positive
- Committed, enthusiastic “saints”
- Theology, willingness to welcome difference
- Trying to walk on water = Faith
- It is a long journey/ allow more time for discipleship/ worship is key/ “authentic, uplifting”
- Openness, Alpha Course, Youth Work, provision of groups, Churches Together, Discipleship
- Charismatic people
- People, openness, risk taking, time, creativity
- Prayer, welcome, hospitality, openness – engage people where they are, not “bottoms on seats on Sunday”
- Effective use of church buildings enabling an outward focus
- Pastoral encounters (occasional offices) and drawing people in through their approach
- Welcome and inclusivity, expectation that we are meeting with God
- Engagement with children, youth etc.
- Engagement with schools
- Engagement with local communities
- Focussing on relationships
- Offering opportunities and facilities
- Welcoming; “word”; teaching scriptures; challenges; confidence in the Gospel
- “Community working” – what we do is what is needed – meets, grows out of their need; common vision, language