

DRAFT VISION AND VALUES



We have been listening

Bishop Hugh at the launch of OtW in East Wivelshire stated

We cannot go on as we are - being unfruitful and unsustainable

These words also relate to Bishop Philip's five priorities for Mission from The Saints Way:

- A Church that conspicuously celebrates children and young people at its heart,' because Jesus placed a child in the centre as a model for us all.
- A Church that unashamedly embraces an innovative pioneering culture,' because Jesus is 'the pioneer and perfecter of our faith' who in his incarnation, cross and resurrection crossed every boundary.
- A Church that is increasingly confident in its calling,' because Jesus was wholly obedient to his Father's will.
- A Church that rejoices in strong, warm and mutually encouraging international links,' because we proclaim that Jesus is Lord of all, and his Kingdom knows no boundaries.
- A Church that rejoices in the generosity of God,' because Jesus trusted wholly in his Father's provision.

The output from the recent Community Survey, together with input from a number of "Focus Groups", has given us a snapshot of how quite a few within the churches see what the church offers - and as important, how well some of those outside the church or on the fringes feel we are meeting the needs of our communities.

Those are the challenges

Let us look at the Bishop's priorities.

A Church that conspicuously celebrates children and young people at its heart,' because Jesus placed a child in the centre as a model for us all

This point was constantly flagged up in numerous Community Survey Responses as well as in reports from Focus Groups. We need to become more welcoming to children and young families and make sensible provision at the right time and in the right place for them as warmly welcomed members of our community. We must also look at and use a more accessible style in language and song to be inclusive.

Bearing in mind though the need for all Christians to up their act and become fruitful disciples, it must be remembered that we have duty of care for the pastoral and

spiritual needs of all, and this applies equally to those who kept the candle of faith flickering over the years.

A Church that unashamedly embraces an innovative pioneering culture, 'because Jesus is 'the pioneer and perfecter of our faith' who in his incarnation, cross and resurrection crossed every boundary

Here we are reminded of the need to be pioneering - outward and forward looking in our approach to a relevant Gospel for our day and age. Too much of what we read the Survey is about 'me and mine'. However, the Gospel should not primarily be about 'me' - but about spreading the word to others.

Therefore, we must also develop a pioneering approach in all that we do, especially in our communities as we seek to find a fresh and invigorating approach, fit for purpose, in today's world.

We need to be involved in a very real way with issues of justice, environment, climate, locally, nationally, and internationally. Through those issues the Gospel truths will emerge.

There is a clear call in the Community Survey for greater community involvement: we need to learn about what the needs of our community are - not just what we perceive them to be and what is required - whilst also letting the wider community know what we already do.

A Church that is increasingly confident in its calling because Jesus was wholly obedient to his Father's will

As we read through the analyses of the Community Survey many things came to light. Some made our hearts leap with joy, but too many reminded us that we have failed to make disciples, and we have clearly failed to be fruitful. This does not only apply in East Wiltshire, but nationally we have a huge band of churchgoers who often fail to 'get the Gospel' and its wide implications for our lives and the lives of our community. Someone once said, 'The Church is the one institution that exists for those on the outside'. We seem to have left that one behind and to the outsider give the impression that we live for ourselves on the inside - protecting ourselves from sin, the world and devil.

Jesus says, take risks for my sake Maybe when those inside become disciples we will indeed be confident of our calling - not before! So, perhaps a need to go back to basics and preaching the basic Gospel truths - God's love for us and our need to respond to that love, asking the Holy Spirit to guide us on the way.

A Church that rejoices in strong, warm and mutually encouraging international links,' because we proclaim that Jesus is Lord of all, and his Kingdom knows no boundaries

As a Deanery we are poor on international links - indeed, there is not any mention of them in the Community Survey. Therefore, there is a need to seek out local international links and get to know others who live in our cosmopolitan communities.

The "no boundaries" comment could also be applied to our working together with adjacent benefices, as a whole Deanery and even with other Deaneries.

A Church that rejoices in the generosity of God, because Jesus trusted wholly in his Father's provision

There was little visible sign of rejoicing in the generosity of God in the Survey responses. It is true that many respondents valued the worship and fellowship they found in their church, but sadly many others seemed more concerned to grumble about where they thought things had gone wrong. When asked how they would like to be able to support their local church, the most popular answer by far was “Time”, followed by “Skills”, with “Money” a very poor third! God’s generosity to us covers all three, and we need to be equally generous with all our resources.

This needs to be addressed with enthusiasm within the great provision of our strong, warm and loving God - but missing in so much of our expression of Jesus and His message. This is connected directly to our lack of fruitfulness and sustainability and sets a challenging agenda as we move forward.

THE VISION

So where does that leave us?

We know the priorities and have a feeling for the challenges they bring us. As we acknowledge the need for change, the thing to do next is to agree a common purpose and vision to headline our Deanery Plan.

That will give us a sound basis for setting goals for each of our churches and on which to think of ways in which we can support each other across the Deanery in achieving them.

Starting points for discussion:

- **Community engagement** - to be available - to respond to their needs - to use our churches in a wider sense - to be generous and open for occasional offices - to promote the work of the church and the many excellent things that are done in God’s name.
- **Reaching out to families**
 - to be welcoming & inclusive
 - to be creative in serving and worship
- **Taking faith seriously**
 - Our discipleship
 - Growing in our faith
 - Learning about our faith
 - Worship
 - Witness - sharing our faith with others
- **Working together**
 - In teams - Benefices - Deaneries