

## Let Us Talk - Pewsey Deanery's response

Representatives of the deanery and the 2 benefices within it decided the most useful way for us to respond to the Let Us Talk initiative would be for each benefice to respond on questions 1-4, with the deanery providing a composite response for question 5. Both benefices, the Vale of Pewsey Team and the Savernake Team, have very recent team and parish profiles which they have been able to draw on as the source of their responses.

At our last deanery synod meeting (at which we were delighted to be joined by Bishop Edward and Archdeacon Ruth), we heard presentations from 2 parishes on the topics of "How best can the church interact with the local community?" and on question 5 from the "Let Us Talk" set of questions. The presentations were followed by a lively and informative discussion. Our response to question 5 – "How can we best measure the quality and impact of church life?" – is derived from those presentations and discussions.

We need to ensure that the church is at the centre of our communities: to engage with the whole community, not just the church-goers. Examples of this engagement could be serving on village hall committees or parish councils, delivery into schools (eg "Open the Book"), village fetes, concerts, open invitation lunches (eg "drop in" lunches in different formats offered by various of our parishes). Some of these activities have a more overtly Christian content than others but each has in common that they provide an opportunity where we can let mission and ministry just happen.

Most of our parishes make wider use of their church building than just for services. Some had been used for performances of various sorts or as the venue for meetings or gatherings of some sort; and in some villages everything had to take place in the church as it was the only public building. At the very least, such events put the church building on the map in people's minds and those participating felt that something uplifting had been experienced.

Some parishes have established strong links with other organisations (eg the military).


Many parishes see large numbers who attended the major festivals, Christingle and other special services. Regular attendance is generally quite small. The challenge was how to translate both these patterns into people entering into a living faith – more than just attending church. We consider that the parishes are very aware of the need to attract more people and that, to do this, they need to maintain/improve the quality of attendees' experience and to embrace change (such as providing activities like Messy Church).

The effectiveness of inviting people to come, even to small events, was mentioned.

So, how to measure quality and impact? We felt one of the best measures of success is the "stories" people tell others about the experience they've had. We need to gather these and "pocket" them: then share, consider and learn from them. In the right circumstances, there is also value in asking people why they don't come to church, though great care needs to be taken with this approach so that it is not threatening or judgemental. We felt there is no one single measurement tool that is helpful and that measuring in different ways leads to practising in different ways.

It was suggested that the number of people coming into church was not a measure of effectiveness.

Not particularly relevant to the question of how to measure quality and impact but we were so taken with, and encouraged by, a comment made by Bishop Edward at our deanery synod meeting that we'd like to close our response by quoting it: "a small church is not a failed big church".



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The Revd Gerald Osborne, Rural Dean



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Rosemary Cook, Lay Chair