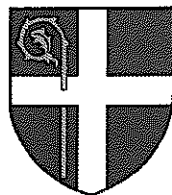


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28 MAR 2013



SHERBORNE ABBEY  
with Castleton and St Paul's,  
Lillington and Longburton

## Let's talk!

- responses to the Bishop of Salisbury

### Introduction

*Dear Bishop Nicholas*

*Thank you for inviting us to participate in the 'Let's Talk' exercise. The responses of our five churches are printed below, exactly as they have come to me from PCC meetings or other gatherings of local church members.*

*On my shelves are quite a library of responses which we have made to exercises of this sort. One cannot help wondering what happens to them all. The last major report we prepared was in 2005. **The state we're in** was compiled at the request of Bishop David, prior to his visit to the Deanery to help us think about the latest Deanery plan. Because much of what it says about this Benefice is still current, you will find a copy of it with this report. Re-reading it, I am struck by how much we have achieved of what is there proposed, not least in relation to St Paul's and the Gryphon CE VC School. Sadly, however, our proposals for reshaping the Deanery – which Bishop David was kind enough to say were the only sensible ideas he had received – were totally ignored. Whether the new 'super-team' proposed for half the Deanery's benefices will work we have yet to see.*

*After the 2005 response came another diocesan initiative, **Rediscovering our Parish Churches**. This consultation was begun in 2008, and culminated in parishes being asked to provide their **2020 Vision**. For the sake of completeness I have added that document (2010) too.*

*More recently The Reverend Jono Tregale has prepared an important paper advancing the case for a full-time stipendiary priest based at St Paul's, to which I contributed an introduction to give some historical context. That too is incorporated in our response.*

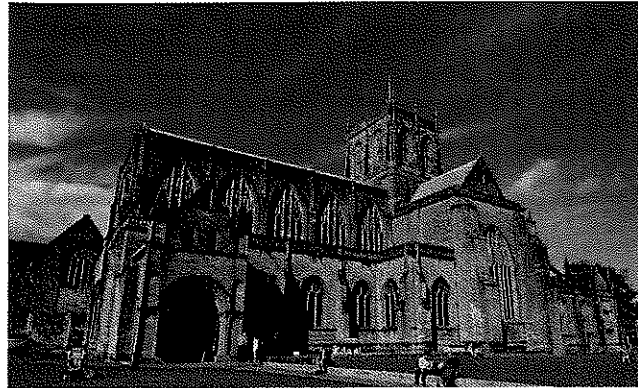
*We hope these documents will be of interest to you – and that they might contribute to your own thinking about a strategy for the Diocese. We send them with our love and our prayers.*

*Eric*

**The Reverend Canon Eric Woods**

SHERBORNE

## Let's Talk – The Abbey



### 1. What is the 'Personality and Character' of your local church?

Sherborne Abbey is simultaneously the parish church of the town of Sherborne and one of the Greater Churches of England. As such it has to balance a variety of roles: to care for its core congregations as their spiritual home; to be a warm and welcoming host to those who want a special service of any sort, whether to commemorate a life or to celebrate an event of county or national importance; to give our many visitors not only a warm welcome but also an experience of the divine, and to share our building with those who want to explore its many opportunities for music, recitals, drama, exhibitions and the like.



We believe that, whilst there is no room for complacency and we must always strive to do better, we succeed in holding these roles together and fulfilling them. The Vicar receives countless letters, cards and emails from those who have been grateful to the way the Abbey has responded to their needs, or who have been touched by a sense of the numinous during their time with us.



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

Our mission statement is *To know God and make Him known in wonder, love and praise*. That means that our first priority is **worship** – the daily offering of prayer and praise to God, making that offering with sincerity and care. The Abbey's 'style' of worship at large services might be described as 'great and glorious', with wonderful music from our recently rebuilt organ and very fine choir. But the smaller services are just as important, including the saying of the Morning Office in the Lady Chapel and the daily celebrations of the Eucharist in the Lady or Sepulchre Chapels.



The second priority is to **serve** – to put God's love into action, because we believe that it is infectious! That's why *everything* has to be seen as opportunity. We move forward steadily, on a wide front, rather than advancing rapidly on a narrow one. Work with and in schools, adult education, giving away 10% of our income, welcoming many thousands of visitors each year, paying great attention to the Occasional Offices, visiting local hospitals and residential homes, maintaining strong links with the town and its civic and commercial life, supporting work with the vulnerable in our community – the list is endless. And it is **shared** – between clergy, paid laity and an army of volunteers.

## 3. Is there one thing you would like to take on or develop in the coming year (recognising that may mean you may need to stop doing something else)?

Our great aim this year is to turn our already extensive adult education programme into something which serves not just Sherborne but the Deanery, and our neighbours over the border in Yeovil and the villages of south Somerset too. The appointment of Jon Riding as Insight Programme Coordinator is already bearing fruit, as can be seen on our new Insight website [www.insight.sherborneabbey.com](http://www.insight.sherborneabbey.com). Jon is working with the Deanery Missioner and former Abbey staff member, The Reverend Dr John Rennie, on making our programme more available to the Deanery, and has established some good links with Yeovil churches and the Diocese of Bath and Wells. We are also conscious of the wealth of talent in our own community: learning and experience which we want to harness to this enterprise.

## 4. Are there ways in which we can work together with neighbouring churches to achieve more?

The Insight programme is one way of doing this. But we need to broker better links with our ecumenical partners. Sometimes being part of a Local Ecumenical Partnership can actually hamper ecumenical progress: we can only travel at the speed of the slowest. But progress is being made. The recent review of the Sherborne LEP is added to this report as an appendix.

We also look forward to developing a stronger link with the Queen Thorne benefice. At the moment this is little more than an email conversation between the Vicar and the Rector-designate of Queen Thorne, The Reverend Vivian Enever. Vivian is currently incumbent of another Greater Church and will have much to offer the Abbey. In turn, the geographical and sociological links between Sherborne and the villages of Queen Thorne make a partnership in mission and outreach a real possibility. The creation of the Three Valleys Team Ministry means that Queen Thorne and Sherborne will be the only benefices not part of a team. Working together seems an obvious way forward.

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

There are any number of answers to this question. One of the Vicar's favourites is 'from the Treasurer's books' – he believes that the spiritual vitality of a church can be seen in how its people respond to its financial needs, and how willing they are to see part of that response given away to other causes and organisations. That is why we have the Faith in Action Committee – to oversee grants to church organisations and secular charities working locally, nationally and internationally. The PCC's grant this year is £36,000. Significantly, the amount given to the work of the parish at our annual Day of Prayer and Gifts last October was £31,000 – a record sum in a difficult economic climate. Never once has anyone complained that they give only to see it given away again. That is really rather powerful.

Or one could ask the schools and town organisations how they regard the Abbey and its contribution to their life. For example, the Chamber of Trade was delighted when we asked to join. The schools value not only use of the Abbey but our contributions to their life: one example is how well our 'Open the Book' teams are received at Sherborne Abbey CV VC Primary School. This is an initiative developed last year by our Education Officer, The Reverend Lesley McCreadie – and now the non-church primary school (Sherborne Primary) is keen for it to happen there too. We think our 'stock' in the town is pretty high.



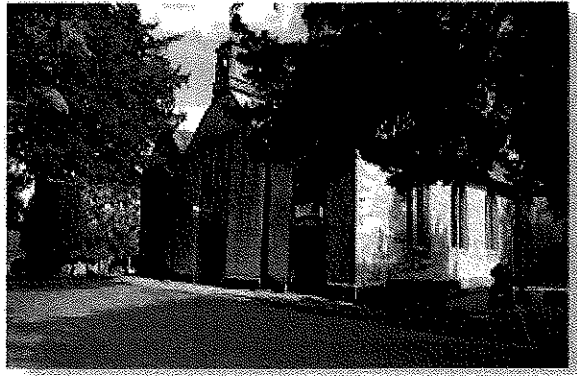
*The Madrigal Society of Sherborne School for Girls in the Abbey*

Or we could look at the way our three churches in the town have developed: the Abbey offering 'great and glorious' worship, Castleton the *Book of Common Prayer* as a staple, and St Paul's pioneering new and informal styles. Yet we remain one family and support one another. 'Thou hast set my feet in a large room', sang the psalmist [31.8].

Or the file of letters received after weddings and funerals could be read. Or the responses to the 'My Rule of Life' exercise we did a few years ago (and which is due for renewal). Or the Annual Report, which has contributions from every parish organisation and group. Or the enthusiasm with which people enter into parish parties and other social events.

If a church believes in moving forward on a broad front, and that *everything* is opportunity, then measuring the quality and impact of that advance must be done on a broad front too.

## Let's Talk – Castleton



Although Castleton's location is a little off the beaten track, tucked away by the Old Castle in Sherborne, it is a very warm friendly church. It dates back to 1714 and replaced a Church built by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1601. He in turn had demolished a little Norman Church built by Bishop Roger of Salisbury, situated outside the curtain wall of his castle, which was dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalene. Castleton Church is made up of regular attendees who are very committed to its work and worship. In June in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, we held a party at the home of one of our Church Wardens. It epitomised the camaraderie of the congregation and amidst all the red, white and blue bunting, tablecloths and cake decorations, new and old members of the Church sat and exchanged lively conversation. Fellowship Sundays, which are held in the summer months, also give occasions for the Church to meet after the morning service and can provide the opportunity to invite new people. It is important to add that the majority of the congregation are retired people but their minds are ready for new challenges and they respond thoughtfully to both sermons and the Insight Lectures arranged by the Abbey. Our services are taken from the Book of Common Prayer and although this may be understood as very traditional there is much life in the singing of Mattins, and in the devout worship seen in the breaking of bread at Holy Communion.

New green shoots are also beginning to appear. One little girl was baptised in a combined service of Holy Communion and Holy Baptism in the summer. She comes regularly with her mother and wanders about the Church quietly and finds herself a seat in the chancel. Her name means 'angel' and so we are looking to see what God will do in this place. She 'belongs' to everyone who attends and we pray that this may be the beginning of new growth. Many babies and young children are baptised at St Mary Magdalene, Castleton, and it may be that we need to follow up these folk in a more focussed manner. For many Castleton is their introduction to Church.

They are far from being a sedentary bunch and they are diligent in expressing themselves through creative gifts. Last year an exhibition to commemorate the 450 years of the Prayer Book took place. Prayer books from earlier centuries were on show. For each season of the Church's year, a cross was erected and the Collect, Epistle and Gospel were attached to its arms. In addition a comment on that particular season and an explanation of the Church's teaching was included. A floral presentation sat close by and the beauty of the Advent season, the exuberance of the Easter Message, the explosion of Pentecost, as well as the sombre note of Lent and the Passion were echoed in the chosen colours of the arrangement. This creativity drew a good number of visitors to Castleton. Cups of tea and coffee were shared also.

The Sherborne Music Festival uses Castleton Church for some of its events and a Choral Mattins attracts new faces. Responding to a new initiative to support the Sherborne Food Bank, reaching out into the community through participation in many charities, including Save the Children, Senior Lunch Club and the Army Benevolent Fund, as well as membership of organisations like the Mothers' Union, Castleton folk live out the life of the Gospel.



At Castleton we like to do things properly and believe that in our welcome, the richness of the worship and the opportunity to meet and share fellowship regularly enhances this place. Our next step is two-fold: to ensure the pastoral care which we corporately share at Castleton reaches all our members and to widen our interest in mission. One of our members works in Voluntary Service Overseas and will come to expand our vision over a tea-time where fellowship and discovery can combine.

We work with other churches in the Good Friday Walk of Witness, Carol Singing before Christmas, Sherborne Churches Together, the Women's World Day of Prayer and by offering the opportunity to share God's Word with other churches during Lent. Some members meet for Bible Study with other Church groups.

To address the question of how we best measure the quality and impact of Church life we would want to move away from a numbers' game. However, to us it is important that our congregation is a regular one and by that we mean people come weekly to services and are very loyal. How we measure the quality of what is given at Castleton is by listening. We talk of how we can improve things and we are very aware of an ageing congregation. We know that pastoral care is at the heart of what we aim to do. People speak well of Castleton and like the welcome they receive and are quick to say how well the Church is kept. The Church is open daily and is a little oasis in the busyness of life. If we look too closely for growth we will not see it but if we stand back and listen to the way the folk begin to speak or reflect on their faith, the way they are happy to participate and to worship together, that is a mark of growth. The impact of Church life is not just within those who attend Castleton but they spread the Gospel in their participation in the life of the town, making life easier for those who struggle and by working alongside other people in their work in the town. Selfless giving is not easily quantifiable and we suspect there is much that goes on in the lives of those who live in Sherborne that only the Lord knows. Perhaps that is the best way!



*Sherborne Young Singers perform at Castleton Church*

## Let's Talk – St Paul's

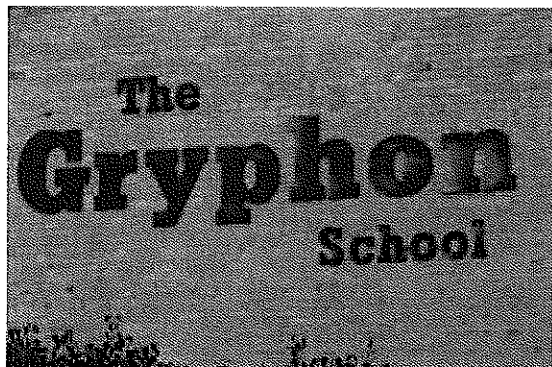


### What is the 'Personality and Character' of your local church?

Low church evangelical with openness to charismatic renewal (with links to the New Wine movement):

1. Christ-centred and Bible-based, proclaiming in word and deed the good news of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, in the power of the Spirit
2. Welcoming and Caring, loving and valuing one another, caring for those in need, serving the community and accepting all comers without distinction
3. Informal and Contemporary, providing a variety of services, with an emphasis on relevance and creativity, whilst retaining reverence
4. All-age and Family-friendly, offering practical Bible-based instruction for newer and older Christians, with the particular aim of making provision for children at every stage of growth
5. Involving every member in ministry, having an accountable shared leadership and an appreciation of individual contributions and Spirit-given abilities
6. Outward-looking, having a concern that all, young and old alike, in our community should come to faith in Christ, with a particular focus on the St Paul's and Gryphon communities whilst also being committed to the work of the church worldwide

*"We are to be 'disciples making disciples', that is, we are growing in our relationship with Christ, becoming more like him, learning to trust in God, and living in the power of the Spirit, such that we have both the passion and confidence to be sharing our faith with others and pointing them to a life-giving relationship with Christ also."*



*"We want to be a church which is 'strong and committed at the core, and open and accessible at the edges' – we want, and expect, committed members to be growing in Christian maturity but we also want to be a welcoming place for people who are simply wondering about whether there's a spiritual dimension to life, such that they feel free to dip in and out of exploring church."*

### **What are the priorities of your local church?**

St Paul's Church has become an eclectic church drawing people from a wide range of backgrounds and from neighbouring towns and villages. This has been the result of its strengths in being welcoming and caring, informal and family friendly, and having a focus on bible teaching. We have become largely a 'gathered' church (people coming together as church because of what St Paul's offers rather than because it's their local church) which quite rightly is offering something distinctive within Sherborne (and environs) in terms of church 'style'. St Paul's does, and should, retain a particular mandate to connect the good news of Jesus with its immediate locality (part of the church's establishment in 1883 and more explicitly in its move to St Paul's Close in 1957). This is about having a specific focus for our activities and our prayers.

Specifically throughout 2012 and 2013, however, the priority at St Paul's is to be 'strengthening the foundations and preparing for growth'. This works out at two levels: individually – personal discipleship and training ('equip the saints'); and corporately – doing what we currently do better.

Specific priorities identified include: promoting membership of small mid-week groups, establishing a pastoral team, providing leadership training, improving publicity material, encouraging an increased practice of personal and corporate prayer, increasing both creativity and professionalism in Sunday services, increasing the mission opportunities of



community activities, running an Alpha-style course once a year, and developing youth and children's work.

**Is there one thing you would like to take on in the coming year (recognising that it may mean you may need to stop doing something else)?**

In a general sense some form of community event (fun day or children's holiday club) based at the church building – making deeper connections with the local community.

**Are there ways in which we can work with other churches to achieve more?**

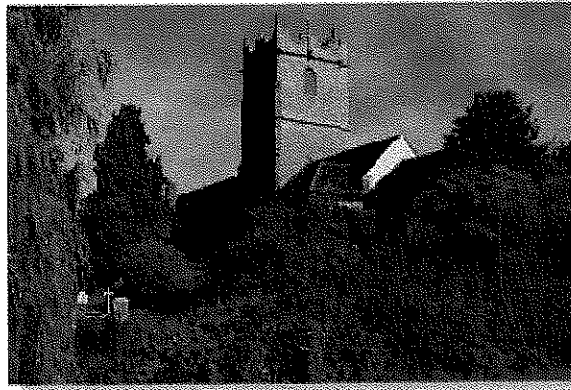
St Paul's actively works with other churches both in the benefice but also ecumenically in the town as part of Churches Together in Sherborne. In particular our Men's Ministry and mid-week small groups are examples of this. Additionally, the Friday and Sunday evening youth work at St Paul's is run in partnership with the Yeovil Elim Church – even beyond our diocesan boundary. In the future the establishment of a Christian holiday club for primary school children may be more possible as an ecumenical venture.

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

Despite agreeing that church life cannot purely be measured numerically it is however an important indicator of health that there is a growth in the number of people actively involved in the worshipping life of the church. But this itself is allied to a growth in depth as those involved in church life gain increased confidence in the gospel and an ability to demonstrate their faith in both word and deed. From a different angle, that of the local community, a further important measure of the impact of church life is how the church is perceived within that local community: what do local people have to say about the church? Is it irrelevant or is a 'place' (or group of people among whom) where people know they can find help, healing and hope?



## Let's Talk – St Martin of Tours, Lillington



The Parish of Lillington was formally united with that of Sherborne with Castleton in 1928 – and more than doubled the income of the then Vicar! The Vicar has remained Rector of Lillington to this day.

The *Dorset Data Book 2011* gives us a population of 60 in 36 dwellings. In 2001 the population was 82. In 1871 it was 186!

In such a tiny community, the loss of a single family can be a blow to the Parish Church. The chief haemorrhage has been of farm workers: today, although the Parish extends over more than 1800 acres, almost all of it farmland, not a single farmer or farmworker lives in the village.

Yet the church is the only ‘community building’ and is filled at Christmas, Remembrance Sunday and Harvest Festival. The present Rector has ensured that we still have a service every Sunday, and when we complain that our numbers are not very many he tends to reply that 12 out of 60 is still 20%, and if he had the same proportion of Sherborne attending the Abbey he would be in trouble!

Because we all know one another in the village, relationships with non-attenders are good, although newcomers unused to country ways – and country smells! – take time to integrate. Clergy often stay inside the church after services because no-one seems to want to leave!

We used to be solidly *Book of Common Prayer*, and the congregation liked it that way. But recently we began a monthly ‘Village Service’ – a non-Eucharistic service nevertheless based on the structure of the *Common Worship* Communion service, and using modern language. This is easily our best attended service.

Our priority in 2013 is to experiment further with services. Being so small, we can do this by consulting everybody. For example, carols at carol services are chosen by a village poll! We have also been heartened by the arrival of a young family who have thrown themselves into the life of our little church. Younger couples and children are in very short supply here, but they are beginning to move in as old age forces our oldest residents to move into Sherborne or to be nearer their families. We are always sorry to lose our older members, some of whom have given the church great loyalty and support – but the arrival of younger people gives us hope for the future.

We are also keen to develop new links with Leweston School, a Roman Catholic independent school for girls of which the Rector is Honorary Anglican Chaplain. These links were encouraged by the last Roman Catholic chaplain, and Anglican girls sometimes attended services. He has not been replaced, but the arrival of a new lay chaplaincy coordinator is a good sign and we hope that we may see more of the girls in the future.

## Let's Talk – St James the Great, Longburton



- What is the 'Personality and Character' of your local church?  
*Friendly, welcoming, innovative, comfortable, flexible*
- What are the priorities of your local church?  
*Draw more people into the Church especially young families*
- Is there one thing you would like to take on or develop in the coming year?  
*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday / Family Services*
- Are there ways in which we can work together with neighbouring churches to achieve more?  
*Making contact with the Longburton Methodist Church – holding a combined Carol Service, continuing to share Harvest Lunch  
Carols in the pub  
Open the Book- Abbey/Cheap St/St James*
- How can we best measure the quality and impact of church life?  
*Tea & Toast for young of village  
Village Cafe  
Bell-ringing with youngsters  
Christingle/Mothering Sunday – success of personal invitation*



## Rediscovering our Parish Churches

### Our 2020 Vision

Name of Church... **Sherborne Abbey** .....

Parish **Sherborne Abbey with Castleton & St Paul's**

31 January 2010.....

How far does the information given in the resource pack [i.e. Community Audit and English Heritage report] reflect your view of your church?

There are some anomalies in the EH reports (the process did not include approval from the parish), but basically these documents are based on information that we provided.

What is your vision for your church in ten years' time?

The parish and its members play a leading part in the life of Sherborne, in many respects. We aim to maintain and build on this position.

The parish offers a wide variety of worship styles: big services with much 'visual liturgy' at the Abbey, and Evensong for those who come to hear a service sung; BCP with no frills at Castleton; and an informal style at St Paul's @ the Gryphon. It is important that we maintain this variety: congregations for each church are drawn from across the town and surrounding villages according to individual preference.

The Anglican parish is only one element of Christian life in the town, being linked through Churches Together with several other active communities. We should see ourselves as part of our overall Christian witness, joining together for activities such as the Good Friday 'Walk of Witness', Christian Aid lunches at Advent and Lent, the Lent study groups, a joint Christmas Card with details of services, etc.

The Abbey is a centre of excellence in prayer and worship, including its 'sub-cathedral' function in mounting civic and other services for the town and the county; in education, teaching, the music festival and other concerts, and the arts. Outreach includes our two church schools (the Gryphon having a half-time chaplain) school carol and commemoration services and educational visits; and the disbursement through the Faith in Action Committee (FIAC) of some £36,000 annually to a range of local, national and overseas causes. The parish community plays a leadership role in the civic life of the town through individual membership of many non-church bodies.

Though we welcome over 50,000 visitors a year to our Grade 1 listed building, it nevertheless remains daunting to non-church people. We would hope to make the local population more at home with the Abbey by developing civic exhibition space. Visitors already come specifically to look at flower arrangements and the occasional flower festival. We could develop this aspect, eg by display of major planning exhibitions, art exhibitions, etc.

Under the flag of St Paul's @ the Gryphon, we seek to consolidate the community project at St Paul's as a mature feature of the East Gryphon area, ministering to the poorer parts of an affluent town (20th most deprived area in the county), with leadership which is not dependent on limited-term clergy appointments. This will include work with young mothers, children and families; with older people in need of company and support; and with young people who feel the town offers them little provision. The Gryphon School Chaplaincy, split 50/50 with parish duties, has been a huge success, but young people still see 'school' as a separate world from an alien 'church'. We would hope to break down this barrier.

Castleton has current challenges with the age of its congregation, but has a valued and treasured position in the life of the town. We seek to renew the Castleton Church community, with less dependence on elderly members, offering viable alternatives to the character of the Abbey and St Paul's, and a community space at the east end of the town. This is work in progress which has yet to reach conclusions.

Our numbers are stable because we continually renew ourselves from the many people who choose to live in Sherborne on retirement. However, this leaves all of our congregations with a disproportionate number of older people, though St Paul's is beginning to turn this round and has some 30 children in its Sunday School. We need to widen our community, particularly in the Abbey where there are few family members apart from parents and siblings of choristers. This will not be easy, as the older children have other commitments (eg a thriving rugby club whose junior section operates on Sunday mornings) and the parents tend to support the activities of the children. We may need to look to wider patterns of worship and religious commitment which are not limited to Sundays.

We seek to widen understanding of the Gospel by civic leadership based on Christian values and by offering the Christian message to individuals and local groups. We seek to implement the Five Marks of Mission:

**TELL** - To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

**TEACH** - To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

**TEND** - To respond to human need by loving service

**TRANSFORM** - To seek to transform unjust structures of society

**TREASURE** - To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

In particular, we need to seek a continuing relationship with those who come into our churches for baptisms and weddings.

We have completed a cycle in which we prayed each week for a different street, and cards were delivered to all relevant houses asking if people would like us to pray for anything in particular. This seems to have been well received and plans are now being discussed to build on this with house visits to non-church-goers. Some training will be needed, and we would regard this as investing in our own people.

The parish is strongly staffed, thanks to the commitment not only of stipendiary staff, but of non-stipendiaries, retired clergy and readers (licensed lay ministers). In addition to servicing the three churches in the town and two village churches in the Benefice, we are therefore able to give assistance to other parishes in the area either during an interregnum or where clergy are thinly spread. There are thus some elements of a Minster function, but we must be careful that we do not, through our size, appear to dominate either the Deanery or the Churches Together in the town.

*[Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary]*

What will you do to achieve your 2020 vision? What help will you need?

The PCC recognised a need to re-examine its priorities in order to answer the questionnaire and held a day of discussion and reflection in October. As a result steps are in hand to re-evaluate the way in which the PCC might operate and adjust its focus in the future; recognising that, while matters of finance, fabric and organisation are a necessary underpinning, we must not be blinded from the mission and vision of the Church.

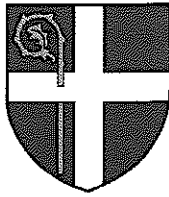
We will continue to develop the St Paul's community project to minister to the poorest part of the town. The spectacular success of the appeal in January 2009 for upgrading of the building demonstrated that the parish will give wholehearted support to this venture.

The Castleton committee will actively look at ways of regenerating this elderly community to provide a resource for the east end of the town.

A working party has been formed to consider the future agenda of the PCC, ensuring that matters of mission and education are given due emphasis. This will include follow-up to the recent PCC 'thinking day'.

We will seek to develop a programme of house visiting.

A ten-year plan can never be regarded as a final document. It is a living document which we shall need to review regularly. Where progress is not being made, we need to understand whether more time or more action is needed, or whether the aspiration was misdirected.



## SHERBORNE ABBEY

with Castleton and St Paul's,  
Lillington and Longburton

### St Paul's Church, Sherborne:

The need for a full-time stipendiary priest ('mission priest' / 'pioneer minister')

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#### INTRODUCTION BY THE VICAR OF SHERBORNE, THE REVEREND CANON ERIC WOODS

In March 2005 I prepared a report for the Bishop of Salisbury and for the Sherborne Deanery Pastoral Committee entitled *THE STATE WE'RE IN*. This was my Benefice's contribution to the preparation of the Deanery Strategic Plan.

In it I highlighted the coming-together of a number of factors which caused me to be particularly hopeful about the future of our work north of the A30, in an area of the town with very significant pockets of deprivation. These factors included the work done with children and young people at St Paul's by The Reverend Jonathan Swindells (assistant curate) and the eagerness of the then Headteacher of the Gryphon CE VC Comprehensive School (Mr Chris Shepperd) both to expand chaplaincy work at the School and to make his new Business & Enterprise Conference Centre available for church use on Sundays.

Events moved quickly. The Reverend Jonathan Swindells was appointed as a Team Vicar in Hove. It was agreed that I could 'trade-in' one training curacy for a new post – technically a curacy but paid and regarded as of incumbent's status – that of an 'Associate Vicar', who would be half-time Chaplain to St Paul's Church and congregation, and half-time Chaplain of the Gryphon School. The School agreed to pay the equivalent of half a stipend and on-costs, excluding housing – as the house at 69 Granville Way was already available, owned jointly by the PCC and the DBF on a 50/50 equity basis.

So in 2006 The Reverend Jonathan Triffitt, assistant curate of Paddington Emmanuel, was appointed to the new two-tiered post. This he fulfilled with great creativity until 2010, when he was appointed Vicar of Southbroom St James. Both St Paul's and the new school chaplaincy flourished. It became

apparent – it had always been a probability – that Jonathan was trying to give each half of his job more than half of his time and energy. Success bred increasing demands. Nevertheless, when he moved on in 2010 it was decided to advertise for someone to succeed him on the same basis.

In the event, that is not quite how it worked out. The appointment went to a husband and wife clergy couple, The Revdd. Jono and Diane Tregale, assistant curates in the parish of St Wilfrid's, Wilford, in the diocese of Southwell. The dynamic of this 'job-share' was deliberately left for them to work out, and in practice Diane has concentrated most of her work on the Gryphon chaplaincy, and Jono on St Paul's. Both soon found themselves working more than the equivalent of three days a week. Whilst they have both been willing to go a second – or indeed a third – mile for the Gospel, it has become clear of late that Jono's work in particular has expanded very significantly, and that many new opportunities to think and work 'outside the box' can only be addressed if his becomes a full-time appointment. What follows is his account of the opportunities and potential of that change. My Parochial Church Council has endorsed not only the principle of the change, but is also prepared to guarantee additional funding. This has been put to us as amounting to £12K per year for five years, with the diocese finding a further £6K per year for the same period. We acknowledge the willingness of the Bishops to support and approve this appointment with great enthusiasm, and a confidence that this is something to which we have been brought by the Holy Spirit honouring the investment of faith, hope and love we have made in the mission and ministry of St Paul's.

#### THE 'NARRATIVE' OF THE CASE, BY THE REVEREND JONO TREGALE

##### **About St Paul's Church**

St Paul's Church describes itself as 'low church evangelical' and expresses this in part through its seeking to be informal and contemporary in style. It has links with New Wine, the major charismatic network within the Church of England, but within its congregation holds together a wide variety of Anglican and non-conformist churchmanship. Within the deanery it is the only congregation to function outside of what could be described as the 'traditional Anglican style'. By meeting in a school building there is an opportunity for creativity in service style and in engendering a stronger understanding that 'church' is not about buildings but about 'the people of God'. Average Sunday attendance has grown steadily over the past few years to 65 adults and 15 children, with approximately 85 adults identifying as being active members of the congregation through regular participation in Sunday worship or mid-week teaching/worship groups. Approximately 30 children also regularly attend Sunday services. In addition to Sunday worship the church runs a toddler group, a lunch club, a cookery course, an over-50s group and an emergency food bank. There are seven mid-week home groups or bible study groups. Pastorally the church deals with a significant number of people with mental health issues. In partnership with a church from another town, which provides much needed leadership and personnel, there is a weekly youth club in the church building (refurbished as a community facility in 2009) and a weekly Sunday evening 'youth church'. A number of Christian enquiry courses such as Alpha have been run and there is a growing men's group which draws men to its regular activities from across the town and beyond. Links with both the local schools are strong with the current Associate Vicar at St Paul's being a governor at the non-church primary school where he is regularly involved 'in school', and his wife being the Chaplain at The Gryphon CE VC Comprehensive School.



## **Mission**

St Paul's Church has defined its mission scope symbolically in terms of three concentric circles with the immediate locality surrounding the church building at the heart: north Sherborne. This is an estate of council / housing association properties; it is not large but contains some of the highest deprivation indices in Dorset. Few of the congregation come from this area and indeed with good knowledge of church attendance at other churches it is fair to say that church-going from this community is extremely low. The vision of St Paul's Church is to be engaging more deeply with this community such that faith in Christ might bring transformation to lives. Beyond this core focus is the rest of Sherborne, the second circle. Most of the current congregation come from other parts of Sherborne and there is the recognition of spiritual need beyond the church building's immediate locality. The outer circle encompasses surrounding villages which relate to Sherborne for an educational or commercial need, from which St Paul's Church draws a number of members. To date intentional mission beyond parish boundaries has not been actively pursued.

## **Vision for growth**

The vision for growth for St Paul's Church is both 'deep' and 'wide'. It is 'deep' in terms of the need for long-term incarnational engagement with the very un-churched community of north Sherborne in the immediate locality surrounding the church building. This requires major commitment of time and energy in ensuring that the 'story of God' is heard afresh within the community. The vision for growth is also 'wide' in terms of engagement with young people and their families who live within the Gryphon School catchment. There is also the recognition that offering a 'low-church' expression of church alongside the more traditional style available in the villages is something that could have a mission impact in the northern part of the deanery. St Paul's is perhaps the only church in the deanery with regular weekly children's ministry.

## **The mission growth specifically envisaged**

It is recognised that in any commitment to pioneering ministry it is an unknown journey that is embarked upon, not a blue-print that is followed. It is a commitment to listening to God and to listening to the community as the people of God seek to engage with those who are disconnected from any sense of traditional church. The question is asked as to what discipleship and worship look like for such people. There is however a clear sense of the focus for the mission future of St Paul's Church and it is both 'deep' and 'wide'. The points below express three mission foci which would be explored – and are in fact closely inter-connected.

- Developing deepening links with the immediate community surrounding the church building and exploring models of discipleship and worship within it.
- Developing youth ministry which extends beyond the parish to an area represented by the catchment for the Gryphon School. There is a critical mass required for youth ministry and even in Sherborne at the moment this is barely reached with young people attending across all the churches – St Paul's being the only church with viable numbers of youth. Young people in nearby villages relate to Sherborne through it being a focus for education, and any development of youth ministry at St Paul's would be able to mirror this in terms of Christian discipleship and worship which is informal, contemporary and accessible. More direct engagement with students at the Gryphon School alongside the Chaplain would clearly be an important aspect of this recognising that, though located within the parish, its catchment is far wider.
- Developing viable 'mid-sized missional communities' in Sherborne and across the deanery which relate into St Paul's Church offering a contemporary, informal, low-church but still

Anglican alternative to traditional forms of Anglican worship. As such the 'wideness' of St Paul's mission could be understood in terms of an 'Anglican network church' of which there are now many examples across the country. This may well be a natural development, in time, of engaging with whole families through initially having contact through youth ministry.

The likely implication of all three of these mission foci is that the structure and pattern of the worship life of St Paul's Church would need to be evolving and changing to accommodate the varying and developing needs of a diverse missional community committed to growing in discipleship and expressing worship in an authentic way.

It is important to recognise however that such a focus in mission on the economically-challenged community of north Sherborne and on young people is not likely to result in hugely increased giving to the church in the short term. This is however precisely where the genius of the Church of England in 'sharing resources in mission' ought to come into play most clearly.

### **The need for a full-time mission priest**

The current post is defined as 0.5 stipendiary but the breadth and depth of the ministry of St Paul's Church is far greater than its size would be suggestive of. The current post-holder therefore exercises his ministry in more than 0.5 of a working week – simply to be maintaining all that is already happening. There is no scope from a ministerial point of view for further growth and development, which St Paul's is poised to embrace, whilst restricted to a 0.5 stipendiary post. Some key factors in believing this are included in the following list.

- It is not possible to innovate or develop missional opportunities further beyond the *status quo* in a part-time role
- Church leadership publications and anecdotal reports suggest that creative and missional churches, especially in contexts such as St Paul's, require largely the same input of leadership whether 75 or 175 in size
- The extension of the current post to full-time strengthens the option of longevity and continuity of missional leadership for St Paul's in a context which requires both innovative and incarnational leadership
- As such, an extension is also about securing a long-term stability and mission future for St Paul's; the extension to a full-time stipendiary minister is not just about benefitting the current post-holder but about the health and growth of the church itself
- There is a lack of flexibility and availability in a part-time post and an in-built inefficiency in the length of time decisions and consultation takes ; far less ability to respond quickly
- In a role which requires more than the current part-time role simply to maintain the *status quo* there is a lack of adequate time for reading and reflection which energises and informs innovation and pioneering

In releasing a full stipend for this post it is about recognising St Paul's role as a 'low church' developing 'missional community' uniquely placed to explore creative Christian ministry in fresh and innovative ways; it is about the calling upon the whole church congregation to be missional and not just its minister. It is about St Paul's transitioning to becoming a 'missional community' beyond just ticking over as the *status quo*; about 'growing up' into the next stage of maturity as a church committed to God's mission to the world and seeking to 'proclaim the gospel afresh in each generation'.

## Review of Sherborne Local Ecumenical Partnership 2012

A Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) is defined as existing where *'there is a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, buildings and/or mission projects of more than one denomination; and a recognition of that agreement by the sponsoring body and by the appropriate denominational authorities.'* For some denominations there is more inter-change of ministries in LEPs than is allowed without that designation. Since 1996 there have been 6 categories of LEP and the churches of Sherborne are in category 2: a Covenant Partnership, in which the churches pledge to work closely together but without the formal sharing of buildings or as a single congregation. The LEP was last reviewed in 2000 and the current review took place in autumn 2012.

### Background

The Sherborne LEP was constituted in 1977, and was quoted as an example of good practice in a 1983 national Roman Catholic paper *'Local Churches in Covenant'*. The original partners were the Abbey; Sherborne Catholic, Methodist, United Reformed and Baptist churches; St Paul's and St Mary's Castleton. Subsequently the Methodist and United Reformed Churches combined to become Cheap Street United Church (a category 1 LEP) and the churches of Longburton joined the Partnership. The LEP was last reviewed in 2000 and a revised Covenant was agreed in February 2007. The Baptist Church withdrew from the formal LEP but remained within the fellowship of Churches Together in Sherborne, accepting the Covenant as its basis for engaging with Churches Together in Sherborne. Longburton Methodist Church withdrew in 2010 due to a lack of capacity for engagement with the fellowship. Cheap Street Church is currently engaged in a process for appointing a new minister.

### The Review

The review used the current Covenant and the 2000 review report as the basis.

The reviewers, appointed by Churches Together in Dorset as the LEP Sponsoring Body, were Revd Adrian Thomas (Baptist) and Mrs Veronica Ziegler (Roman Catholic). Val Potter acted as administrator and supplied background information.

The reviewers conducted interviews and attended 2 meetings of Churches Together in Sherborne.

### Points arising from the review

- The ministers/clergy seem to work well together. This is very positive. However, the challenge to the CT Sherborne Committee is how it may build on this to promote the work and activities of CTS so that it can thrive through changes of ministers/clergy who may not all be so supportive.
- Joint worship was regarded as something which had become natural and energising. It was/is an important activity of CT Sherborne.
- There is general support amongst those involved in CT Sherborne for both the organisation and what it is seeking to do. There was a very positive feel at the Committee meeting and it seemed to work well. It was recognised that there was a need for the 'discipline' of such a committee. At its best it can provide an enabling framework to create an environment in which effective practical projects and activities can be undertaken. Without this role much of the work done could be un-coordinated and lack cohesion.
- Sherborne is a small town and people know and interact with each other. A number of people from the different churches meet each other and work well together on various voluntary activities in the town, some of them church based.
- For some it is the practical work supported by CT Sherborne that is the most important aspect of its operation and influence. This is the 'public face' of the churches in the town. The challenge is to give mutual recognition to both this and the 'structures'. The prominent display of the Covenant in each church would help with this.

- The member churches of CT Sherborne are committed to its work but not all wish to be involved in the LEP. This is because for some the LEP enables them to do more together and for others it might alienate some of their people. Our feeling is that this was widely recognised and accepted. The challenge is to give parity of esteem and mutual respect to those who are members of both CT Sherborne and the LEP and to those who are members of CT Sherborne alone. There are not degrees of commitment demonstrated by membership or not of the LEP.
- The relationship between the Committee and member churches and their congregations is an aspect of CT Sherborne that could be given particular attention. Engendering enthusiasm within the churches for feedback from the Committee is always a challenge. One positive suggestion from the Committee was that a document be produced outlining the role of the Committee and expectations of its members. This could act both as part of an 'induction' for new members and enhance the two way dialogue between the Committee and the churches when Committee members report back.

### **The Challenge**

It is good to be reminded of the vision and the goal of the ecumenical journey together. Churches Together in England (CTE) 2012 Forum reminded us of the wider ecumenical context and the General Secretary, Revd David Cornick summarised the vision for us: *"An ecumenism that is not focused on the oikoumene (the whole inhabited world) is not worth the effort. Unity is never an end in itself, it is the goal of the missionary God who will not rest until all are gathered in the sheepfold, brothers and sisters of every colour, culture, age and ability - united in praise and adoration"*.

How do the churches and CTS Committee maintain their vision of ecumenical co-operation, mutual respect and service together to the town in the years ahead?

The final Statement from the CTE Forum gave some pointers to help:

*There is much evidence of churches already working together, of local cooperation in projects and the building of strong and trusting relationships.*

*Our ecumenical structures need to help churches to grow and to herald the kingdom, as well as moving to hold one another accountable.*

*We need to celebrate each other, and to accept the gifts which each brings. Our variety is a God-given gift which we need to appreciate and honour. Love requires us to listen to each other, to share what we have and to learn from each others' traditions. We have a strong call to continue to work together but also to pray together.*

*We are not only called to be one but also sent to be one. This is risky, for we open ourselves to our lives and our churches being changed. We have to be able to confront our own churches and accept God's challenges. But we are not alone. God journeys with us and the Holy Spirit holds us and leads us and provides for our needs. Love comes from God's gift to us of himself. Let us receive it and live it together.*

### **Response from Sherborne Churches Together (February 2013)**

- Sherborne Churches Together welcomed the report with its affirmations and challenges and had found the review process positive and constructive.
- Bullet pt 6: they wished to stress that currently there is total parity of esteem and respect for the church which is a member of Sherborne Churches Together but not the formal LEP (for structural reasons) and felt that the report did not make this as clear as it might. They urge all in the future to maintain this understanding and relationship.
- For a complete picture they wished to add that Sherborne Community Church, although not a member of Sherborne Churches Together, does join in some of the shared activities e.g. the Good Friday Walk of Witness.