

Collated Responses to Vision Process

Overview:

The responses were generally encouraging. We have summarised them under the following areas:

- Who we are
- What we do
- Where we feel called
- Gaps and Challenges
- Suggestions

There are a few parts of the responses which focus on particular details or recent decisions (e.g. why do we do x now?) – these have been recorded elsewhere and where possible will be followed up through conversation.

Who we are:

Another way to look at this area might be ‘what being family means to us’. Words/phrases used were:

- Welcoming;
- Friendly;
- Prayerful;
- Bible-based;
- Commitment to the Word of God;
- Sharing the Good News;
- Caring of others;
- Supportive;
- Accommodating;
- Active;
- Outward looking;
- Loving;
- Gentle;
- Warm;
- Safe;
- Peaceful;
- Forward looking;
- A Loving Family;
- Humility & Transparency;
- Catering for all age groups;
- Positive Atmosphere;
- Linked to local and global community;
- Beacon;
- Shining Light;
- Church is my life, I enjoy it!
- Hope
- Togetherness
- Willing to listen
- Encouraging congregation to take part
- Guided by the Holy Spirit

What we do:

There is a sense that there is a lot going on, though some parts are better known or more visible than others.

In taking stock of where we are now, these have summarised below, colour coded into three categories which give a subjective impression of what the threshold for engagement might be for someone who is not already part of a given group or activity.

1. **High engagement, low threshold**, which are the kind of thing someone outside the congregation might engage with without necessarily joining other things. Some are intentional outreach, others are just low demand.

2. **Medium threshold**, which are more targeted and we might encourage some level of commitment to the group or church over time, &

3. **Across the threshold**: Activities which are primarily targeted at those who are already part of our church congregation.

The activities we currently offer/enable are:

- Pray
- Outreach to children, young people, and families (**Teddy Bears & Coffee Pot Carer & Toddler/Baby Groups, Messy Church, Junior Church, Toddler services, Abbeymead Under 5's, Core Youth Group**)
- Engage well with Hillview School including **Open the Book, Assemblies, & School Services**
- **Community Garden and Workshop**
- Outreach to Adults (**Lunch Club, Tea & Toast, Tuesday @Two, CAMEO**)
- Community events (**Quiz nights, Make It, Concerts, Carols in the Pub, Nativity on a Lorry**)
- Links to Mission Partners (**Foodbank, Gloucester City Mission, Tanzania, Pawsons in Japan, Deanery Youth Connector**)
- Links to deanery and local ecumenical partnerships
- Variety of Worship styles
- Pastoral Care
- Baptisms, Weddings, & Funerals
- Joint services
- Intergenerational services
- Prayer services & Prayer Ministry
- Confirmation
- Small/home groups and Bible studies
- Communion
- Traditional Easter and Christmas services (e.g. Carol service, Crib service etc)

Where we feel called:

The responses on this area have been grouped into 6 areas:

1. Living the Christian life

- To be a community and place which values and is active in prayer
- Grow in a healthy way and prioritise our efforts with God
- Aware of the Holy Spirit
- Be a beacon of hope and joy, a worshipping community in love with the Lord and faithful to his command to love others
- To love God and our neighbour
- Anchored on Jesus, oriented outwards, and connected to our local community
- To deepen and strengthen our connections – with God, with others, with our community, and with the best version of who God has made us to be
- Exploring what being a loving Christian Family means to us
- Sharing life, love and the Good News of Jesus

2. Relating to one another in love

- Be a church which supports, heals, calms and celebrates
- Be part of a community where it's OK not to be OK
- Be kind to others, mindful and respectful of their needs and emotions.
- Care for one another, being an unselfish fellowship of love.
- Unite and help each other, act with love towards others even when challenging.
- Provide a safe space where people can feel valued.
- Be more aware and thoughtful towards the lonely and the young who feel lost or troubled.

3. Relating to our community and beyond

- Be relevant to and in the heart of the community
- Be more outgoing and visible in the community seven days a week - to be a vibrant centre of the parish.
- Meet people where they are and encourage them by holding regular events.
- To reach out to our community, seeing everyone in the Parish as important and part of things.
- To be relevant to everyone in the Parish (and beyond).
- An approachable, friendly, neighbourhood church, serving & supporting the community and seeing fruit come from those relationships.

- Loving outwards at all levels
- To communicate what we do and who we are better and more widely
- Work with other local churches.

4. Inclusion, Belonging & Diversity

- Embrace diversity.
- Breadth & inclusivity – actively including others while honouring and respecting differences.
- To engage with people of all ages and phases of life, but particularly to be welcoming to young people and families.
- Notice and care more for people with disabilities and neurodiversity.
- Don't overlook the elderly.
- Attractive to the 20 -40 years age group.

5. Growth, Identity & Releasing Spiritual Gifts

- See people released to be who God made them to be.
- Grow in a healthy way and prioritise our efforts with God.
- To become more aware of the Holy Spirit working in each person and to be a place where Spiritual Gifts are nurtured and encouraged for the good of all.
- To enable more people to use their gifts, find their place, and be involved, particularly young people and families, without pressure.
- To help people grow in their faith.

6. Environment, Buildings & Resources

- To improve our site buildings.
- Use the garden more.
- Care for God's creation.

Gaps & Challenges:

The responses are grouped into 6 areas:

1. Age Profile & Generational Challenges

- Mature (elderly) congregation.
- Elderly volunteer force, though good number are engaged at present.
- Missing generations (20s-50s).
- Social activities for younger people.
- Current family activities have a gap around 8-13yrs old (tail off from Messy Church).
- Junior Church challenges (broad age range, small numbers, consistency).

2. Faith development, Pastoral Care & Support

- Preparing Godparents for Infant baptism
- Support groups for specific needs e.g. mental health, bereavement, parenting.
- Engagement of housebound with church services and life

3. Community Presence & Outreach

- Connecting with those who don't know the church is here, and here for them.
- Be a presence for those who do not yet know God
- Be relevant to everyone in the community
- Meet people where they are (not expect them to come to us)

4. Worship & Music

- More musicians needed.
- Balance of known and new, traditional and contemporary music.

5. Building and maintaining connections

- The gaps between the three congregations (8:30, 10:30, Messy Church).
- Maintaining connections with Baptism families.
- Follow-up to events – what are we inviting people to come to next?

6. Buildings & Resources

- Financial challenges.
- Our buildings are a potential asset but need attention & planning for the future.

People highlighted the following concerns:

- Problems connected with ageing.
- The appalling state of society and the world.
- How to encourage young families to be part of the church.
- How to live a life of traditional faith whilst living in the modern world.
- Worries about family and friends who are not Christian
- How to engage with people.
- How to maintain faith.
- How do we get our message out?
- Are we relevant to the Parish?
- Grief & loss
- Loneliness and belonging
- Volume of worship band
- Neurodiversity & disability
- Caring responsibilities
- Personal purpose and identity
- Time poverty
- Family pressures, work, money

Suggestions:

The responses are grouped into 6 areas:

1. Worship, Prayer & Spiritual Life

- Additional services (e.g. Sunday afternoons, mid-week Holy Communion)
- Consider whether to have something particular on 5th Sundays (e.g. more informal, child-led service, prayer & praise, etc)
- Be experimental with services (e.g. Pet service, outdoor service, seasonal)
- Charismatic worship in contemporary services
- Alter seating arrangement to make more welcoming
- Open band practise & prayer
- Live soaking prayer
- Develop the Wednesday evening prayer service more:
 - Outdoor prayer in the summer
 - Approachable name and poster needed
- Prayer Labyrinth in the Peace Garden.
- Engage with 7 Sacred Spaces
- Engage with Eco-Church

2. Teaching & Discipleship

- More small/home/cell groups with centralised vision and programme linked to sermon series/themes.
- Sermon/teaching series which could be publicised locally.
- Provide recordings of sermons or services

3. Children, Young People, Families and Schools

- Continue to expand youth/children involvement.
- Youth group in addition to Core group (10-18?).
- Engage with Sportily, possibly in parallel to Messy Church.
- Explore resources (e.g. booklets) to support Godparents.
- Have a yearly event where we invite Baptism families for an event in the church centre (e.g. Sunday Afternoon Tea) .
- Use the 'Experience' (Easter, Advent etc.) and prayer spaces for schools resources both with school and more generally.

4. Community Life, Social & Bridging Events

- 'Make it' more than once a year (e.g. Easter, Harvest/Autumn)
- More/wider range of shared/bridging events which bring people together e.g. joint services, shared meals, community events, etc.
- Curry/Pizza/Fish & Chips & Karaoke.
- Movie night/Faith & Film, planned as a series with discussion questions for groups.
- Second bite group for 50+.
- Church open more during the week.

5. Pastoral Connection

- Offer church services to nursing/residential homes and similar establishments (Question from Joe: are there any in the Parish?).
- WhatsApp group for the whole church (currently Messy Church only)
- Make contact when people don't attend for a couple of weeks.

6. Leadership & Governance

- Need for honest conversations about succession and evolution of leadership in some areas of church life
- A small team to share efforts on writing funding grants, particularly to support work on our grounds & buildings