

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*