

Benefice Responses and Questions

General comments

- We need to be kind and generous to each other – there will be pain and sadness over some (inevitable) changes
- In the Benefice communication has to improve! There has to be change; we cannot stay as we are; cannot stick in the mud; all too complacent.

Mission

- The summary is well informed and the suggestions for the long term are to be embraced – encouraging lay participation through training is an essential part.
- Our Church is not in a 'missional position' but has great historic value – who will decide which churches close?
- What does a sustainable mission focused church look like? Demographics/activities/spiritual life/etc?
- Festival churches are a good idea for poorly attended churches, plus 'champing' – camping by the public for payment in the church
- Yes – to a reduced workload for the benefice incumbent. No – to any church closure. Closure may mean loss of attendance at service and a loss of finance for the diocese. Is the prospect of the Leadon Vale benefice so forbidding for new applicants? How do other multi-parish benefices operate? Encourage more benefice services.
- Why has Leadon Vale suddenly become unattractive? This is a recent problem.
- This situation must have happened before: why can the diocese not give us an idea of what kind of Benefice we need to be in order to attract a new Rector? We'd have something to work on; it would save time even if we don't agree with it entirely.
- Speak to our own children/family. As PCC members we are responsible for the buildings. It is difficult to relate church/mission to the rest of society.
- Improve discipleship in present congregation, so they have knowledge, skill and courage to go out.
- School contact is essential – more so than worship in church. Really only Dymock and Redmarley should be retained – others should be made redundant (as they already are)
- Lay ministry – more people need to be encouraged and trained. Pray to God for guidance.

Worship

- One service a month will mean no parishioners and no income. People do not go to Benefice meetings
- More lively worship. I can see some hard decisions do have to be made.
- Services (meetings) can be held in people's homes if church buildings are closed. Priests are only occasionally required then
- Modern hymns, worship songs, services in places other than church
- Contemplative worship is offering that 'varied menu. We need to be open to opportunity.
- More contemporary worship, less liturgy, more room for Spirit to move and grow
- Less 'Cathedral lite' services; more active participation by all worshippers
- Worship on the green, in the school, in the pub
- We must pray and pray and pray. Maintaining the status quo is not an option – change must be now. We have the opportunity now to work with Tudor. Leaving any longer leaves things to get worse.
- Create centres of excellence
- Be aware we need to move forward in mission. Movement with music. Training of identified roles within the Benefice.

- Do you envisage a choral service every Sunday at Redmarley and Dymock?

The broader context

- Not just try to make new members – what can we offer to our community? Not hide behind our walls.
- Before taking any measures should we not send questionnaire to all villagers – eg. what services would they like? How well do they think each church is doing or not doing? They don't seem to be involved so far and this could affect later decisions.
- This process has not involved the wider community in the parishes yet. They like their churches and do not realize they are in trouble.
- Proposals need to be shared with the whole community. Some churches are historically very important
- Sustaining poorly supported and little used churches undermines the Benefice by placing excessive staffing strain and joint Benefice services do not sustain the needs of many and we lose members
- I think 9 parishes is not viable over this area. Why can't other Benefices take over some of the parishes because we are too overloaded? How many other areas have NINE parishes to look after? I doubt any.
- When is the advertisement for a new rector going to be put out? What is this dependent on?
- If and when any churches are closed, most of the congregations will probably not go anywhere else in the Benefice.
- Consultation needed with the people in each parish.
- Allergens – ingredient lists, gluten free wafers, no-dairy drinks.

PCCs and Structures

- What does the closure of a church involve? What is the financial implication for the remaining churches re the parish share?
- Plan of action – what, when, implications. Looking at time scales. Identify roles for development of different areas. Plan for forward-thinking, ie priorities
- Invite headteachers to PCC meetings. Who are our foundation governors?
- If services changed, you would lose some who don't want to travel regularly. How do you allocate Quota if no regular services? Some churches have money donated for specific items. Can PCCs be merged legally?
- *PCCs are made up of retired people running churches for retired people* – most of our parishioners are retired, we can't just magic young people out of nowhere! Sometimes it just is what it is.
- *We're not doing enough towards Safeguarding* – we don't have any issues, how is that a bad thing? We can't identify issues that aren't there.
- When there is no public transport, how do people get to the other churches?
- Who to communicate with? Membership, occasional attenders, wider community. What to communicate? Practical details (service times, etc), what we stand for (our mission) what we offer (our work beyond the building), our stories and histories.

God's call

Love one another

Suffer the children to come to me

Intentionality

Listen without defensiveness

How do we ask?

Community's call

Comments specific to Upleadon

- As a member of Upleadon Parish and Church supporter all my life – 78 years – I object to my church being closed or only 2 services a year. The Benefice should never have covered nine parishes. Also 8.30 services are too regular – we should have a variety of times.
- Why Upleadon has an 8.30 service? No other parish has it that early. Why?
- At Upleadon we are only getting two services each month; one of the services has been at 8.30 a.m. No other church in the Benefice has consistently had 8.30 service. Despite objections, nothing has changed. Why? Suggest future meetings for discussion take place at a different church for each meeting.
- Upleadon has always met the parish share (paid its way)
- Why were we made to spend all that money on the building if it is going to be closed?
- The soul of Upleadon will be gone if the church is closed. We recognize need for change but not by closing Upleadon Church. People in Upleadon will not go to other churches. Upleadon could have one service maybe a bi-monthly Benefice service. Can other churches in the Benefice survive financially? What would happen to Upleadon Church as it is a Grade 1 listed building?
- Would be the church still be physically open to visitors? Who will maintain the buildings, clean them etc?