

## What the Benefice people think...

### Pithy points:

- Think outside the box
- Share resources
- Church without walls (and pews)
- Everything we do is (or can be) a ministry (said Uncle George!)
- Responsibility for parishes to become a Benefice concern – be a family
- Communication – be open, listen, share
- Think – what would Jesus do?
- Open to new initiatives – all ages. Innovate
- Be brave, honest, assess yourself, explore together
- Break down fear and accept
- Succession planning!
- ‘Growth is the only evidence of life, change is the only evidence of growth’

### Probing questions:

- Is finance the main stumbling-block?
- There is a willingness to support the church and social functions. How can this be translated into active membership?
- Stronger ties with schools is paramount; youngsters are aware and have knowledge of the Bible and faith. How do we build upon this to carry faith forward into their lives?
- The Church is seen by young people as not relevant to their lives. What is the message that Gorsley Festival have to make them so successful in drawing young people?
- What is our mission as parish, benefice, individuals?
- Do we make more of the building and not enough of the people?
- What would our ideal church look like?
- Who are we afraid of upsetting?
- How do you get the nine churches to work together?
- How do you get the younger end of the village interested in doing something other than getting married in the church?
- How do we meet the expense of keeping nine churches open?
- How do we overcome the difficulties caused by the wide distribution of church buildings?
- How can one Rector deal with nine parishes and four schools?
- What will happen with failure?
- Is the Church the building or the worshipping community?
- Should we be taking a radical look at the size/shape of the Benefice? Can we blame worshippers who don't travel from, say Bromesberrow to Preston?
- Leadon Vale is clearly an artificial construct, covering eg Bromesberrow/Preston, which would not feel themselves in a Leadon Vale. It does not have the same meaning as eg. the Vale of Evesham. So why is it there?
- When will the C of E enable laity who are called to exercise their particular gifts of the Spirit – prayer, healing, discernment, evangelism?

### The Wider Picture:

- Failure? What will happen? Don't be afraid to revisit.
- More community use of church buildings – not just seen as places of worship
- Integrate church schools to a much greater extent
- Inclusion – ages, stalls, personality, individual perceptions of faith
- Don't expect people to come to church unless you're offering something different

- As the authority in the C of E is top down – people wait to be asked to conduct intercessory prayer
- I do hope that the leadership are prepared to take risks to expand ministry more than being fearful and protecting what is
- More presence of the Rector in the parishes would be good.
- Radical vision; take small steps, show by example
- Our congregation will not come to us. Our discipleship is to take the message out, to teach, to draw to faith by understanding
- Encourage and inspire young people – in schools, church, social media
- The Benefice still seems to have two groups. A more united Benefice would be more attractive for a new incumbent
- Go where people are – physically, emotionally – sensitively
- We have a message of love, hope, everlasting life. We are not conveying, connecting our message
- Going out to where people are (not just schools)
- There are too many villages for one Benefice
- The cost of maintaining our buildings is diverting us in every way from the true purpose of care and well being of all Christians and those we hope will join us.

#### Specific suggestions

- Change service books – less standing
- Make the Benefice smaller
- Ask +Rachel to do an audit of all the churches to tell us what we are doing well and not so well.
- Invite inspirational speakers
- Make services more inviting to ALL
- Different locations for services
- Rogation walks
- Fresh start – still keep some traditional services for those who want it
- Services on Kempley Green; also Pet Service – perhaps even in the Village Hall
- Appoint two churches – Dymock and Redmarley as Benefice centres of worship with a Eucharist every Sunday (eg 9.30 and 11.00). Close Donnington, Preston and Upleadon for regular services and hold perhaps twice a year services; the remaining churches to have a service once a month on a rotational basis.
- Possible midweek services to replace Sunday services in those churches
- Growth of lay leadership for non-sacramental worship, pastoral visiting, etc
- 9 parishes are too many for one Benefice and the churches are in the wrong places. Use other buildings – Village Halls, schools and homes. (Churches are only buildings)
- Conversion of churches into community centres
- Chairs instead of pews, making churches friendly and versatile; put in loos and kitchens
- With services – be more modern; invite children to a service where they can take part – playing a musical instrument
- Change format of some services – shorter and more user-friendly
- Involve more regular worshippers in reading, leading Intercessions, etc
- Pre-service walks and breakfast
- Involve PTA with church activities; in some case reinstate PTA
- Need Benefice Council and not 9 PCCs making their own individual decisions
- A single Benefice magazine
- Two Benefice services – one in east and one in west to recognize geographical realities.