

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

What can we offer?

- *‘The church is the only society on earth that exists for the benefit of non members’*
Archbishop William Temple.
- A stable Christian presence, especially in times of crisis
- We minister to all people
- Practical and pastoral help
- A message of good news
- Baptisms, weddings, funerals – preparation, services and support

Why?

Social capital

Over recent years academics have looked at how people engage in society and make their contribution to their neighbourhood and community. This is called ‘social capital’, the investment that people make through their contribution to communities, through belonging to groups and engendering community spirit. More recently theologians have started to take about religious or spiritual capital, which was crystallised in a CofE report in the term ‘**Faithful capital**’. This is the investment through actions, and projects that Christians make in their community based upon their belief that this is an essential part of the mission and ministry that god has called them to.

Resourcing Christian Community Action

A report produced in 2012 on why and how churches should engage in community action. 35 examples of projects from around the country. The website contains the report, resources, projects

www.how2help.net

Practical strategies and resources

There are many useful websites here are just a few covering a wide range of topics. Further information about church buildings, mission and ministry can be found on the diocesan website. The Giving Initiative is primarily about giving to the local church by a congregation responsive to God’s generous love. However this response also includes sharing God’s love in practical and unconditional ways with the wider community.

Where are we and where is God calling us?

Taking stock of where the church is, what is happening in the community and asking ‘where is God calling us?’ are important steps. The following are useful resources

- ‘Looking to the future?’
- Growing healthy churches (see book resources below)
- Mission Action Plans

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Church buildings

See church buildings and tourism resource sheets

Irregular attenders

- Ensure genuine welcome and inclusion throughout service and afterwards
- In due course, irregular attenders may well become more regular in attendance and be prepared for planned giving - see Enhancing the giving of current contacts
- www.better-fundraising-ideas.com Our focus is on committed giving but we don't want to ignore fundraising potential

Fringe members

- Consider ways to build on the links we already have eg Time and talents leaflet found at www.salisbury.anglican.org/parishes/stewardship
- Hold a 'thank you' service for helpers
- Plan social and fund-raising events which appeal to and directly involve these helpers (belonging before believing) eg church produce market, cheese & wine evening, afternoon tea and games
- Invite people to contribute a specific skill
- Make it simple to respond financially eg *Commitment leaflet found at* www.salisbury.anglican.org/parishes/stewardship

Casual contacts

- Consider the image your church presents: would you be attracted to attend?
- Is there an up to date Church website, or a page on the local website?
- Are the church and its environs well maintained? www.churchcare.co.uk
- Is the church accessible to all including the disabled? Go to www.throughtheroof.org.uk
- Does the welcome extend to support and inclusion throughout services and fellowship time after, encouraging visitors to become more regular?
- Look critically at the notice board (Is there out of date clutter? Does it present a positive message? Do your activities appeal as worth funding?)
- Consider café-church to encourage new attendance – for a training and support network go to www.cafechurch.net
- Identify varying need groups in the parish eg single dads www.wholetthedadsout.org
- See 'Meet people where they are and in language they understand' www.givinggrace.org
- Get ideas from www.engagetoday.org.uk; or www.hopetogether.org.uk supported by Churches Together

Children and young people

- See the church through their eyes! Do they feel welcome, involved?
- What provision is made?

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- Consider a Fresh Expression – see www.cofesuffolk.org and go to Life & Faith/Mission>Fresh Expressions of Church, or see Resources for Young People on our Church Culture: Teaching and Learning about Giving page
- Strengthen parish links with schools, especially CofE schools. Use Cathedral Discovery Centre which offers courses, resources and activities both in the Cathedral and in the parishes www.cofesuffolk.org and go to Children & Young People/Discovery Centre
- Use a Scripture Union Lifepath programme to celebrate a significant character or event in parish history - see www.scriptureunion.org.uk/Lifepath
- Play to our strengths and use what we have imaginatively (eg a small rural church in a woodland setting has run a successful holiday club planned to make use of its natural resources and local expertise www.syleham.onesuffolk.net)
- Parent and toddler groups www.engagetoday.org.uk/playtime
- Messy church www.messychurch.org.uk
- Consider café-church www.cafechurch.net
- Learn to use social media www.churchofengland.org.uk/communication

Elderly and vulnerable

- Initiatives such as lunch clubs, hospital transport, planned pastoral visits programme
- Active appreciation of any financial support
- www.engagetoday.org.uk (an initiative of 'Care for the Family' and a wealth of support for practical ministry and mission)
- If you live near Aldeburgh, you may be able to find out about a project called Old Age and How to Live It or try a contact on the church website www.aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk

Books & magazines

Growing Healthy Churches work book; Robert Warren; CHP

Developing Healthy Churches; Robert Warren; CHP

Mission Action Planning; Mark Chew and Mark Ireland; CHP

Faith and the future of the countryside; Jill Hokinson and Alan Smith; Canterbury Press

God Shaped Mission; Alan Smith; Canterbury Press

Reshaping rural ministry; J Bell, J Hopkinson, T Wilmott; Canterbury Press

CountryWay

Published 3 times a year and full of practical ideas on how to engage in mission and ministry in rural areas. £3.95 an issue. Available from The Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG.

Tel: 02476 853060

Email: officeadmin@arthurrankcentre.org.uk

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DIOCESAN CONTACTS

The following diocesan officers can help with many of the ideas outlined above.

Kathleen Ben Rabha Diocesan Community Affairs Advisor

kathleen.benrabha@cofesuffolk.org 01473 683323

The Rev'd Canon Paul Daltry Minister for church and community engagement (Ipswich)

paul@daltry.co.uk 01473 217739

The Rev'd Dave Gardner Diocesan Director of Mission

dave.gardner@cofesuffolk.org 01473 298521

Helen Woodroffe Diocesan Childrens Officer

discoverycentre@stedscathedral.org 01284 748734

Marion Welham Church buildings and tourism officer

marion.welham@cofesuffolk.org 01502 578154

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NOTES FROM THE LGA TRAINING SESSIONS

The church is already in touch with a wide range of people and groups, here are a few examples.

Existing Contacts

- Existing congregation
- Church members who are now housebound
- Electoral Roll
- Those on rotas, helping out but not active members
- Those who help with the church, cleaning, flowers, maintenance, churchyard
- Friends Groups
- Pastoral contacts, especially following up baptisms, weddings, funerals
- Those who read the parish magazine, especially where it is delivered to every house
- Those who visit the church website /face book page
- Those who give financially even if not attending church
- Village and community activities that may be in partnership with the church e.g. coffee mornings, lunch clubs, afternoon tea, good neighbours scheme
- Church Hall users
- Schools (national curriculum) visits to school and by the school to the church, festivals
- Parish Council
- Community Council
- Youth clubs
- Uniformed organisations
- Parent and toddler groups
- Concerts
- Quizzes
- Special events e.g. fetes
- Coffee mornings
- Harvest suppers and other social events
- Christmas lunches
- Car boot
- Local and national organisations e.g. Royal British Legion
- Local businesses
- Contacts through chaplaincy work

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Potential Contacts

- Future occasional services
- Newcomers to community
- Those who maintain graves
- Visitors/tourists
- Schools
- Those who read the parish magazine, especially where it is delivered to every house
- Those who visit the church website /face book page
- Café
- Special events
- Shed project (men's project)
- Meet and greet
- Parent and toddler events
- Art sessions for children
- Messy church
- Local and national organisations e.g. Royal British Legion
- Local businesses

How might we engage with a wider number of people?

Practical actions and personal contacts are very important. Here are some ideas that have emerged from our workshops.

- Effective follow up to pastoral offices.
 - Anniversary cards for baptism, annual baptism celebration events
 - Follow up weddings with greetings card, anniversary cards, regular celebration of marriage
 - After care for bereaved with visit, All Souls events
- When the Library Van visits a village the church organises tea, cakes and chat. A wonderfully simple act of hospitality.
- Men are not well represented in many churches. Many find church irrelevant or too feminine. Therefore special male only type events may appeal. 'men in the pub' a meal and a speaker, men's breakfasts. The shed project which is literally a shed where men gather, loan tools, mend things, or simply have a chat.

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CHALLENGES FACING THE CHURCH AS IT SEEKS TO ENGAGE EFFECTIVELY WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Barriers to effective engagement

- Our own reticence
- Fear of rejection
- The public image of the church (this can also be an opportunity)
- The idea that the church is very rich
- Outdated communication
- Tiredness and over commitment

Opportunities for effective engagement

- Using positive strategies eg Growing Healthy Church
- Vision and action
- We need the 'bottle to ask'
- Encourage engagement
- Show that the church is relevant
- We are the 'established church' so use it as an opportunity
- Demonstrate support for the community
- Advertise events, banners, 'A' boards
- Get the community involved on the PCC
- Networking
- The importance of one to one contacts

Church issues

- Perception of Diocese
- Dealing with suspicion – the church is always after money, even when it says it isn't
- Speaking boldly about money
- How do we make a 'free offer' of service to the community?
- The difference between rural and urban communities with reference to service, evangelism, fundraising
- Living the gospel
- How can we be involved in our community as part of our discipleship?
- The impact of the national church and the diocese on the local church – 'them and us'
- The building – blessing or curse?
- Making the most of our contacts (stewardship)
- Community Action Plans, 'Looking to the future?', Growing Healthy Church, Audits
- Lack of religious teaching in schools
- How to build on contacts to fulfil spiritual need of occasional attenders
- Resistance to change

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- Dealing with the press – the negative media picture
- Social Media
- Grants and grant making bodies

Community issues

- Lack of affordable housing
- Isolated older people
- Lack of knowledge of neighbours
- (Poor) communication, even within families
- Sunday activities e.g. sport and the challenge of lots of things for families to do
- Tiredness due to over commitment

Communication

- Welcome packs
- Parish newsletters
- Anniversary cards relating to baptism,
- Follow-up thank you's (some parishes organise annual 'thank you events' for those who have done things through the year eg the magazine distributors, or those involved with the building and churchyard. Not only is it good to say thank you but as many of these folk are irregular attenders at church it helps them feel part of the church family).
- Saturday night pub - clergy presence?
- Use of "story" and creating
- Opportunities for sharing.

Meeting spiritual needs

- Build on contacts – follow up with caring (Christian social action as expressed in food banks, Town Pastors etc).
- Go where people are.
- Provide meeting place, eg. well-timed tea afternoon.