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Discerning our future

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 Growing in God



 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich

Discerning our future

- 1. How do we identify local/focal ministers and what would you expect them to do?**
- 2. What's the future role of church buildings in mission?**
- 3. How do we strengthen congregations and deepen faith?**
- 4. How do we strengthen our response to our environmental crisis?**
- 5. What creative ideas do we have for developing new sources of income?**
- 6. How do we extend our community engagement and partnerships for the benefit of the people of Suffolk?**



How do we identify local/focal ministers and what would you expect them to do?

Group 1

- **Ministers need to be encouraged to be highly proactive in encouraging vocations in others - it often takes three 'taps on the shoulder' before someone will recognise something in themselves. (Andrew Dotchin's quote: "Shepherds give birth to shepherds; sheep give birth to sheep").**
- **Be Bold**
- **Get a group of people from the benefice who are 'vaguely interested' to explore together - we used to do this as a pre-course to engage with the Diocesan Ministry Course.**
- **Make sure everyone knows what is already there from the diocese by way of support and encouragement (Growing Leaders, Messy Church).**
- **Develop the skills in existing ministers to discern what people can do.**
- **Find a better name for 'Elder' which puts people off. LLM (or just Local Minister) is better.**
- **Training *is* modular and doesn't have to be long and onerous... do people know that?**



How do we identify local/focal ministers and what would you expect them to do?

Group 2

Training needed for clergy to equip them to identify and support prospective focal ministers.

Not to over rely on focal ministers.

This must be seen to be a ministry not financial initiative.

Values or solutions:

- 1. Good training and teaching about why we are doing this within our church communities.**
- 2. This provides valuable continuity in parishes.**
- 3. These do not need to be ordained people.**
- 4. Why not upgrade Lay Elders to this role? Important to be full members of the local Ministry Team.**



What's the future role of church buildings in mission?

Group 1

- **Suitable for modern use...pews? facilities?**
- **With community**
- **Do not impose vision**
- **Buildings to be open and welcoming with clear intent.**

Group 2

- **Develop partnerships more fully - eg school, church and council - in ways which enable creativity around usage of buildings**
- **Grasp some nettles such as pews, fonts, governance which enable greater flexibility use and thus helps with partnerships above**
- **Need to consolidate our resources - perhaps more "moth-balling", festival churches, but falling short of closure which is locally demoralising and not easily reversible**



How do we strengthen congregations and deepen faith?

Group 1

- **Small mid-week groups online or physically meeting.**
- **Online services of all kinds, Zoom etc.**
- **Creative use of our buildings, e.g. prayer areas, labyrinths, prayer trees, toddler groups etc.**

Group 2

- **Concerns are excluding people who have no online access.**
- **People missing after service coffee and chat with chance of fellowship.**

Suggestions:

- **Use of online courses - through zoom etc.**
- **Bring a bible to church - if folk haven't got one sell them and put the profits towards the parish share.**
- **Produce a diocesan directory of possible online resources buildings.**
- **Work with community do not impose vision.**



How do we strengthen our response to our environmental crisis?

Group 1

- 1) Reduce physical meetings by 50% and replace with Zoom meetings providing support for those who need to help to engage by this means.**
- 2) Replace fossil sourced heating systems in our church buildings where possible with green sourced systems (solar, ground sourced) with assistance from a central fund given our financial pressures.**
- 3) Lead by individual example the 'little' actions each household can take such as buying fair trade, shopping locally, not using plastic - and let others know what we are doing as a church and as an individual Christian.**
- 4) In all of the above work in partnership with many others in our villages and towns who share our concern for the Environment especially with children, young people and their families.**



How do we strengthen our response to our environmental crisis?

Group 2

- **Less driving to reduce carbon footprint.**
- **Renewable energy - ensure use.**
- **Get everyone to consider overall consumption - paper, fuel, carbon - set targets and actions and have visible goals so people can see if achieved - promote Eco-church.**
- **Carbon -off-setting - can we e.g. buy a wood (Woodland Trust) - buy trees.**
- **Grants for solar panels?**
- **More preaching on environment and taking advantage of church's year - harvest, Lammas etc with clear environmental teaching.**

Overall - need to be more specific - targets & actions, not just 'encourage' but 'commit'.



What creative ideas do we have for developing new sources of income?

Group 1

- 1. Better use of Parish Giving Scheme including perhaps a letter from the Bishops** (though not all parishes would want this).
- 2. Easy funding app which will top up purchases made online, also donate buttons.**
- 3. Sponsoring outside lighting in memory of a loved one.**
- 4. Periodic raffles although we note that this won't appeal to those who feel it is gambling.**
- 5. This week's text 2Cor9 was very helpful to preach on!**
- 6. Village calendars and recipe books, also getting Matt the Telegraph cartoonist to draw a cartoon which was sold.**
- 7. We must lose our embarrassment at raising money: St Nicholas Hospice lottery idea (Stephen Smith)**
- 8. Online collection in plate.**
- 9. Teaching the wider community about the principles of giving.**
- 10. Lavenham visitors account for a bigger % of giving than individuals, also their shop and book revenue has fallen (online book shop idea).**



What creative ideas do we have for developing new sources of income?

Group 2

- **Feeling part of something - church or community.**
- **Fundraising ideas and sharing good practice - shared website space.**
- **Grants - imagination with our projects and feeding into lots of different sources / use of technological skills.**
- **Overall linking to people in our communities - face to faith!!**



How do we extend our community engagement and partnerships for the benefit of the people of Suffolk?

Group one

- **Poverty**
- **Hunger**
- **Job loss; isolation; schools; spiritual hunger.**

Group two

- **Key solutions-food banks/pop up shops/night shelter.**
- **Develop phone support for those who are isolated.**
- **Maintain and develop engagement with schools and families.**
- **Online Alpha.**
- **Need to develop partnerships with MU, women's refuges to support those suffering from domestic or child abuse.**
- **We need to develop partnerships to increase capacity, recognising scale of need in communities and fatigue in churches.**

