Discerning our future

Bishop Martin
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-offsetting - 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 - churched 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.