

Diocesan Vision: A wider strategy

The above only considers our services, but our calling is to do much more than put on services.

Our Diocese is developing its strategy based on the vision:

The Kingdom of God: good news for all.

To proclaim afresh in the generation the good news of the kingdom.

Values: Generous Faith, Courageous Hope, Life-Giving love.

Aiming for: Transformed Lives, Growing Churches, Building Community.

We need to develop our strategy to include the breadth of how we might help God's kingdom grow in Dronfield and further afield. As a first step in developing this wider strategy, the Diocese have given us 4 questions:

1: What does the kingdom of God mean to you and for you – in your everyday life and in the life of our worshipping community?

2. What will generous faith, courageous hope and life-giving love look like for you?

3. How might you – in your everyday life, and in the life of your worshipping community – proclaim afresh, in this generation, the good news of the kingdom of God to others?

4. What are the ways you might need to equip people, shape structures and sustain resources for this mission in your context?

We would value your thoughts – and if your response is “I don't understand” or “I've no idea” then it would be good to know.

Strategy for Dronfield Parish Church

Strategy must always be derived from our **common aims**. They are:

UP: To enable as many as possible to worship, pray and grow in their Christian faith.

IN: To love each other in thought word and action.

OUT: To love those outside of the church in thought, word and action, and to help them to start and continue a journey of Christian faith.

Change in our service pattern?

In our DCC meetings we have been discussing how our services support these aims, and whether we should make some strategic changes.

The arguments for our pre-pandemic pattern and some issues are:

8am and 6.30pm: Loved and valued by those who go, helping them in their worship, and for some providing worship at a convenient time. Some go to 8am or 6.30pm so that they can have a quiet prayerful service for their own needs to compliment going to another service where they have to give much more. Good for UP and IN. However, these services are not easy for someone unused to church - weaker on OUT. They are easy for clergy to take.

9.30am: Loved and valued by those who go, helping them in their faith, though some have said 10am would be better. Many have joined our church at this service including coming through joining the choir. With children's work at the back, a few children have loved coming. However some families have said they wouldn't bring their children to these services because they might make too much noise. Some choir children have loved the music but have found the rest of the service boring. Good for UP and IN, issues with OUT?

11.15am Holy Communion: Loved and valued by those who go, including a number who go to 9.30 at other times. A few have said – “the best service of the month”. The informality, smaller numbers and roles for teenagers and children have made it popular with some families. The average numbers coming have doubled. They take significant resources, using a music group, setting up the computer and projector etc, and it needs a different “sermon” from ones you might use at other services (but Peter enjoys the creativity...). Good for UP, IN and OUT.

11.15am Chattabox / Thanksgiving Service: Families coming for thanksgiving have loved the welcome and don't worry if their children are noisy. The services have included action songs etc., to involve the youngest of children and show that welcome. The informality, with roles for children have made it popular with some families. The average numbers have doubled. As for 11.15 Communion, these have taken significant resources, but we have now tried using videos for the music which seems to work very well and is easy to do. Very good for OUT with the thanksgiving families, and good for UP and IN for those who like this style.

C of E research – Anecdote to evidence:

Given our aim of sharing our faith – part of OUT – we have looked at this research as to the characteristics of growing churches. Significantly, churches who have a range of services, each with a consistent style and targeted at specific groups, are more likely to grow than churches that have just one service trying to please everyone. This suggests that we should keep the range of services.

Arguments for changing the pattern:

Doing one service instead of 3 or 4 might bring us together as one church – but only for those who come to the service. Better “IN” for those who come? But what about those who won't? For this reason, and from the C of E research, going down to one service would not be good. But it would be good to keep having occasional united services to build relationships across the breadth of the church.

Doing an 11.15 style Communion service at 10am as the main service for everyone once a month, as we did in May, might bring the majority of the 11.15 and 9.30 congregations together. (Good for IN). It would mean stopping Morning Prayer but we are only aware of one person who particularly likes Morning Prayer (are there others?). The use of video projector etc., in this service also gives the opportunity for a different style of preaching (as we did at Harvest). Better “OUT”? But the larger numbers might change the atmosphere that was loved.

Doing an 11.15 style Thanksgiving / non-Communion service as the main service for everyone (as we do at Harvest) would mean that visiting families get a glimpse of more of the church. However, if we had to compromise the style in using more “adult songs” we would lose the child focus of the service that the Thanksgiving families love. If we stuck with the current style, with action songs etc., we don't think the majority of the church would come, or they might come and not join in which would harm the atmosphere.

A way forward and what do you think?

Service Pattern:

Given the above, my current thought is that:

- We should keep our 8am and 6.30pm services.
- On the first Sunday in a month have 9.30 Communion and 11.15 Chattabox / thanksgiving.
- For the rest of the month have 10am Communion services with one being in the “11.15 style”.

Some of my arguments are based on my understanding of what people think, but I've not asked everyone. Do you agree or not, and why?

Service Style / Content

Changes to the styles of these services might further our aims.

To make informed decisions we need to know what features of the services help you in your faith, and what we might constructively change. We can't please everyone all of the time, but our aim is to help as many as possible.

Which service(s) do you go to?

What do you find most helpful about this service / these services? And what is not helpful?

For those that have come to our “united Services” – like on Pentecost, and the 10am services we have had in this last year, what do you like? For those that don't come, what puts you off?

Please could you answer the questions and return them to Peter by Sunday 18 July. Use extra paper if needed.