

## Bishop Richard's questions for PCCs – From St Mary's, Ross-on-Wye

### 1. If you were having an APCM in 2025, what things would you like the vicar to be looking back at with thanks for the last five years in the life of your parish?

- The continuing fulfilling of our vision set out in January 2020 to inspire faith, hope and love within our town.
- The continued development of both new and traditional types of worship that people of all ages and backgrounds can relate to and the ever increasing number of people of all ages coming to regular worship as a result.
- The lessons learnt through the 2020 pandemic in terms of digital church and in caring for our neighbours.
- The generosity of our congregations.
- Being active within the community and sharing Christian love and zest for life in our community events.
- The benefits we have experienced as a result of the reordering of St Mary's Church.
- The spiritual growth of the PCC.

### 2. Taking the three most popular of these, what steps do you think you would need to take as a congregation to get there from where you are now?

- **The continuing fulfilling of our vision set out in January 2020 to inspire faith, hope and love within our town.**

Annual vision days, shared communication and listening to God and to each other and the local community about next steps in order to feel empowered to make the change

Grow leadership and project management skills

- **The development of both new and traditional types of worship that people of all ages and backgrounds can relate to and the ever increasing number of people of all ages coming to regular worship as a result.**

Expressing our faith by looking to encourage and expand all activities involving children & young people

Continuing and taking ownership of the work begun by the Intergenerational Missioner (Messy Church, Alpha courses, toddler and youth worship)

Accepting that we need different types of worship and that one size does not fit all

Continuing the expansion of different service/meeting models on digital platforms which engage people in new ways who may not be able or want to attend church in person

- **The benefits we have experienced as a result of the reordering of St Mary's Church.**

Showing our love for the town by making our church building available to anyone in the community

Experiencing different types of worship

Holding events other than worship to which we can invite towns people and draw them in and make them feel at home

**3 What are the barriers to you making those changes?**

- Time of individuals, especially those with jobs and families
- Resources, especially in a digital age when electronic equipment is so necessary
- Co-ordination – as a PCC we hope to overcome this
- Shortage of younger, active people
- Convincing the existing congregation that if we do not adapt, we will wither and flounder as a church & community.
- With so many of the current membership aged over 70; it means that their friends are also over 70, so to involve younger people means inviting people not currently known to us.

**4 How could you address those barriers?**

- Spread the load so that no individual is overwhelmed but has a small part to play
- Continue to engage the PCC as leaders and doers
- Take real action to help the whole congregation to understand and accept our vision.
- Activities for children always has growth potential. Children usually bring parents and grandparents.
- Develop an activity culture which has children bringing their parents to church and not parents bringing their children

**5 What help might you need from the wider diocesan family to realise this vision?**

- Joint events to share ideas, vision and resources and encourage each other in the diocese
- Identify evidence of what works in other places by arranging visits to other parishes
- The support of specialists in the diocese, and the continued appointment of House for Duty priests in Walford and a maintaining a Curate in post as much as possible.

**6 What does your congregation/ benefice have to offer the wider deanery?**

- Music skills, organist and good organ, traditional choir
- Digital skills, especially in live streaming, recording, use of website and social media
- Brilliant ideas from our Rector about capturing opportunities to share Christian faith
- Beautiful large church building
- The experience of reordering the church to make it a community resource as well as a church

**7 Where could you be co-operating more effectively with other benefices in the deanery?**

- St Mary's is happy to host gatherings of young people (or any people of any age) from across Deanery.
- The choir is happy to (and has) visit other churches for special services in other parts of Deanery.

**8 What scope is there for using your buildings more imaginatively?**

- Increased use of the more flexible building following the 2018/2020 improvements will develop naturally. We need to ensure that all parts of the community are aware of the flexibility of our space for exhibitions, festivals, lectures, concerts and conferences.

- 9 On a joint benefice Sunday service, why do you think it is that so many take a Sunday off if it's not in their parish?**
- Not relevant to Ross as the rare benefice services are held in Ross due to capacity of the church, however.....
  - People like the familiar journey, comfortable with the known or maybe problem physically getting to another church?
  - "It's a different country - they do things differently there" (and I don't want to know about it!).
  - This is a nationwide problem; for many there is a feeling about taking a break, relieved that, for once, Sunday morning doesn't involve having to do the many little things that are necessary for your church service to happen as expected. (Schools see the importance of taking breaks, is there a lesson here for churches?)
- 10 How might they be encouraged to see this as valuable service to support?**
- Joint planning of the service
  - Need to feel involved
  - Joint recognition and ownership of churches beyond boundaries.
- 11 What would help the members of your congregation give more generously to the work of the Church?**
- Further use of the Parish Giving Scheme and allowing to take part using online banking
  - Understand how money is used including ministry funding, mission, encouraging/supporting other Christian endeavour as well as buildings and fabric
  - Make digital solutions easier to understand for some people
  - Encourage small amounts of giving and show how makes a difference
  - This should emerge from successful outcome of Q3 &4, but we also need to explain to everybody that we cannot continue to run a budget deficit, and we must generate more income.
- 12 How might you make a decision to reduce the number of more traditional services in order to release space and energy for more contemporary styles, eg Taize, Messy Church, Café Church, Bible studies.**
- The question presumes the need to reduce the traditional in favour of the modern. The "more traditional" services and the more contemporary styles are not mutually exclusive. They can co-exist comfortably, and with our increased flexibility this is already happening. e.g We use Taize worship within a traditional service
  - Messy church happens on a weekday
  - Café church regularly happens in one of our other churches in the benefice
  - Bible studies happen in the week
  - To be there for everyone, the church needs to lose its Sunday only image – in today's society there are some who are unable to attend church on a Sunday
  - We are making first steps, and hope for the successful achievement of acceptance across the main Sunday morning congregation that many forms of worship are worthwhile – there is far more to worship than Eucharist.