

# THE PARISH OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST, BROUGHTON

Charity Number: 1134595

*Jesus said, "I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." John 15.16*

*We seek to make Jesus known in our community, through our joyful, loving service and worship*

## Parish Review 2018 – Worship

**Sub-Group: Chair, Revd. Rie Walker; Mr. Barry Townsend; Mrs. Mo Baldwin; Mr. Max Cross**

### The Aims:

- To review the current worship provision across the three worship centres of the parish.
- To have an understanding of the reasons why people attend the church they attend.
- To look at the spirituality, value and sustainability of worship provision within the parish.
- To show possible changes in service provision to meet perceived need, allowing development and participation of services to reach different age groups and profiles.
- Data was taken from the Parish Survey (2018), discussion, research and observational assessment.

### Current Patterns:

The parish Worship Ministry Team consists of: two priests who preach, celebrate the Eucharist, baptisms, weddings, anoint the sick and dying, hear confession, celebrate funerals, celebrate Services of the Word; one deacon who preaches and celebrates Services of the Word, baptisms, weddings and funerals; one licensed Lay Reader who preaches and celebrates Services of the Word; one retired priest who offers one Sunday Eucharist per month; one Ordinand who preaches and leads Services of the Word.

The current patterns of worship include not only three worship centres and different worship styles on Sundays, but also daily services of the Word and bi-weekly Eucharist Services (Wednesdays at St. John Baptist and Fridays at St. Martin's Chapel). The current Sunday services schedule offers 3 or 4 Eucharistic services on Sundays (including St. Margaret's) together with non-Eucharistic services. This pattern is repetitive and makes it difficult to create opportunities to explore other expressions of worship. It is not sustainable in the longer term.

### Questionnaire Results:

1. In general, parishioners attend those services which offer their preferred style of worship.
2. There is a desire to grow lay leadership of services, but 97% of respondents said that they did not wish to assist.
3. There is a desire to enable more active participation of girls in worship, e.g. through an additional choir, servers teams, readers etc.
4. There is an appetite to provide opportunities for contemplative worship.
5. There is desire to "market" Broughton's excellent parish choir more widely within and outside of the parish to attract more people to Choral Evensong and other choral services. Although Choral Evensong is demonstrably increasing the attendance of cathedrals, especially among young people, not enough people know about the availability of this service at our parish church.

The sub-group was mindful of the church's tradition, its spirituality, and its current worship patterns in the light of the church it wants to be in the future. From the quantitative results of the survey, it

was clear that most people were of the opinion we needed to grow, but to what, where and when is as yet unclear. What was apparent from the survey results, discussion and experience of current practice was that if we are to sustain and grow new church membership and serve our growing population some long-standing ideas and perceptions need to be challenged and the style, timing and schedule of services, together with parish worship as a whole needed to be considered along with possible changes. That is not to say we should discard what we already have. **There is a beauty, a deep spirituality and wonderful worship in all three of our parish centres. We need to celebrate this and understand where our worship sits within current day needs if we are to grow and develop in accordance with our parish vision “to make Jesus known in our community through our joyful, loving service and worship.”**

Whilst 50% of respondents expressed an interest in change in types of worship offered in our parish, there were few ideas as to what that change could be, except for an indication of having more contemplative, quiet, reflective services. There were fewer offers of help. 97% of respondents indicated that they would not participate in leading, designing or delivering services in any way. Yet when approached personally and encouraged to participate in services individuals respond positively and willingly assist. Here are opportunities for education, encouragement and support for more people to take part in services, to develop our culture, to get people more used to participation and get away from the question “we have never done this before...so why now?” With the Diocesan lead to encourage more lay leadership in our churches (which the whole ministry team are aware of and are actively addressing), we need to develop this area in the near and medium term.

There is a perceived lack of engagement with young people and young families. Some of our services were deemed to be “outdated” and lacking in spiritual content that would appeal to younger families. It was clearly felt that children and young families should be at the heart of our planning, especially as it was recognised that we have a mainly aging population in all of our worship centres. The question is when and where these ideas would be put into practice, what would be the desired content, and who would be available to undertake the role and development of these services? Understanding why young people and young families are not drawn to our parish and do not attend in greater numbers needs to be fully understood. Involvement of our two parish primary schools is pivotal. However, any planning must be mindful of and include our existing congregations and retain worship that is valued.

Another area of perceived need from this survey is the ministry by and for women. There is little for lay women and younger girls to take part in within the existing worship pattern. This is reflected in the current worship numbers, especially at the parish church. There are very few young people who attend St John’s who are not in the choir, and even fewer who are female. There is an opportunity for training and development of servers, acolytes etc. within the structure of the Eucharistic services and exciting possibilities within Family Worship services. To date it appears to parishioners that worship at the parish church is a mainly male preserve with no opportunity for change. Similarly little has been done to explore the role of women in the other 2 worship centres. This area requires more investigation and discussion. The questionnaire responses show that there is interest in a women’s/girls’ choir and for more opportunity to participate in the running of the services.

There are, unsurprisingly, a significant number of parishioners strongly drawn to the services associated with the wonderful choral tradition that is offered at St John’s. BCP Choral Evensong still retains its popularity according to the questionnaire figures. However, from attendance records, there are relatively few people who attend this service not directly connected with the choir. Current research shows that increasing numbers of people, especially younger people of university age, are attending Choral Evensong services. Broughton parish has the only choir of

quality in a wide area. Why are we keeping this service to ourselves? Marketing and the public “face” of our Choral Services are poor and need to be addressed.

Reaching others is part of ministry and service and the choir could easily undertake this on a wider scale than they do now. Visiting other churches is already part of the choir’s psyche and practice. Possibly the choir’s ministry could be shared more widely within the Deanery. Our parish is understandably proud and determined that the choir should go from strength to strength. A majority of those surveyed feel this strongly, but there is also a significant desire to look at revisiting and refreshing the choir’s remit.

Research formally undertaken by Mo Baldwin with the members of the ministry team (giving a qualitative view of their roles and actions), supplemented the review of worship. One of the main findings was the “busy-ness” of the rotas and all that entails. With the worship focus at the three centres (four if St Margaret’s is included) being wholly Eucharistic, there is little room for creativity or development. The clergy approach is a maintenance one; “fire fighting” rather than planning ahead and giving time, support and pastoral care where needed. Exacerbated by reduced ministry team numbers (losing 3 Readers in the past three years), clergy are under pressure to get to the next venue on time, produce different styles of sermons to suit different styles of worship, and produce different types of services to suit different occasions. Attachment to worship centres, attention to detail and communication can therefore be lacking and often things get missed or not attended to. The congregation seems to have little idea of what their clergy do in a week. Issues include: better communication with parishioners, the number and type of services, the number of clergy-lead services, the need to encourage more lay-lead worship, time management, and making a success of our partnership with St Margaret’s. There is a need to reduce and refine to allow clergy to do what they do well, to allow for growth and development, and to review the dependency on retired clergy (who are retired for a reason!). A new model of services needs developing to refresh the system, to allow some breathing space so that Jesus is the focus for all, that the Spirit can indeed move and can offer a renewal of life where we become a healthy church, transforming the communities in which we serve. (Diocese of Blackburn, Vision 2026)

### **Conclusions:**

The survey results, being mostly quantitative, require more exploration and discussion. We have started the process. We have to be realistic about what we have and how we can move on. Questions arise about quantity vs. quality of services and the resources we have for leading services. Do we have too much of one format that dominates? Are we appealing to essentially similar groups in different places at the same time, preventing opportunity for change and development? How can we interest and train more lay people to lead services? There is a core of worshippers who would want nothing changed, 50%. Of that 50% most responses against any change are over 90%. But there are as many parishioners who wish to explore new ways of worship. Traditional services are valued in the parish and certainly would be missed if removed. Therefore we should retain our traditional services, but do we need as many? Should the format be looked at? Does the liturgy need refreshing?

Is it realistic to continue to run three worship centres on the current basis? How mobile are parishioners? According to the survey 60% of parishioners say they are mobile, and with more joint services taking place across the parish and at Ingol St. Margaret’s, there certainly seems to be more mobility. Assistance with transport can be developed as a regular offer if required. Could a redistribution of resources give us the opportunity to broaden the range and appeal of our core service offerings?

Prayerful consideration of the way the worship is undertaken has been at the core of all the group has tried to do. We feel we need space to allow the Spirit to move and grow more within our churches and have tried to look at this with our suggestions for growth and change while still

retaining our traditional Anglican roots. As such we, the Worship Review Committee, have come up with the following suggestions as a starting point to look at the worship within our parish. The suggestions allow some “wriggle room” to allow us to start looking at change and development, small steps to give confidence rather than cause panic! However, we feel change is a must otherwise we will always have what we have always had and that will not allow the growth and development that that parish clearly wants.

**Recommendations:**

The quantitative survey (whole parish) revealed a number of gaps in our provision for worship life of our parish as well as some issues people identified with individual services. The qualitative survey (worship leaders) revealed a worship team overwhelmed with too many services to cover and a desire to ‘do less, better’. In the light of the results a revised worship schedule is being explored, and will be presented to PCC.

Reverend Rie Walker, Chair