

## **Blessing the Community**

### **Notes from the Group meeting at DCRF Worship Workshop October 12<sup>th</sup> 2019**

#### **General:**

- In thinking about Blessing the Community – we are thinking about a continuum of activities from facilitating social activities, to celebrations and thanksgivings, remembrance and dedications, to offering prayer and blessing, to services of worship in many forms – and of course – being there for all the people in their needs – in baptisms, weddings and funerals – in special services to mark the seasons and the Christian year (as covered by other groups).
- Relationships underpin all and are needed first to invite people to worship. We need to be part of the loop in the community. To know what it going on to be able to offer blessing or prayers and be responsive to the community's needs.
- We need people to link between parish council and church, village hall and church, Wi and church ...
- Services in appropriate places – pubs, parks – anywhere - one Easter in Bideford a communion service for the local businesses in the cattle market
- Shalom – everyone working together with God to their full potential with friends, neighbours, enemies, and environment. Building Shalom important
- Use of Symbols – can make it easier for people to speak

#### **Bringing people together**

- e.g. hosting coffee mornings, lunch clubs, craft afternoons – helping provide space for people to get to know each other and tackle rural social isolation and loneliness
- eXchange café – nice coffee, homemade cakes, bring something spare (school uniform, apples ...) leave and pick up
- Gathering place – providing a gathering place for people together for fun – warm and invitational
- Lent in Okehampton – people who work in the community came in and talked about their faith – open invitation to all in town to come and listen

#### **Prayer**

- Possibility of providing “chaplaincy” at coffee mornings so pastoral care and prayer can be available – a lot of people appreciate prayer but are not necessarily ready for worship

- Provide a bench/seat/sofa available for prayer – maybe in a market or square – have someone there as a prayer pastor
- At a village fete – church tent with bookmarks with texts, sweets and offer of prayer in a private space – people took bookmarks and sweets but not prayer – perhaps still too public – or just not the right day
- Prayer tree outside the Rectory available for all village to ask for prayer
- SW Coast Path – some churches provide prayer resources, drinks, biscuit bars etc. for walkers
- In Dunsford – people invited to say what they wanted from church – led to “Breathing Space” – a monthly quiet service – significance in asking community what they wanted
- Praying the streets – out walking and inside – part of intercessions weekly – let people know when their street is being prayed for so they can ask for any particular prayers

### **Farms and Businesses**

- Rogation – evening service with hymn and prayer around church, a garden, businesses and farm to a bring and share supper at a farm. Moderate attendance including farmers who didn’t normally come to church.
- Farmers don’t always have time for regular services so special services are important
- Important to pray for farms and other businesses in the parish

### **Bridges**

- Cricket service – if God was on the cricket pitch where would he be? Fun – held in a pub on a cricket tour – light hearted with a gospel message
- Carol services in the pub
- Open the Book – worship in schools – some evidence from one school that children are behaving better since Open the Book

### **Remembrance and Memorial**

- Responses to sad events – closures of schools, business, “funerals” – recognising loss – learning to start again ...
- Offering memorials for the community
  - Remembrance, VJ/VE days, Centenaries, – people can bring symbols and memorabilia – perhaps an exhibition
  - Remembering people – dedicating memory trees etc.

### **Blessings**

- Animals – blessing a herd, blessing a new venture, blessing pets, sheepdogs
- Blessing a new bull
- Blessing brings presence – warm loving welcoming presence of God

- Blessing as a bridging word between the sacred and secular

### **Celebrations and Thanksgivings**

- Thank you evenings – for people who help at church – one church 54 people help in various ways – only four of whom are regular congregation members – rest part of wider community who want to help in some way – grass cutting, cleaning, historians, refreshments ...
- Wider thankyou and celebrations – a service to celebrate local community organisations and groups – invite people to bring along a symbol of something that represents their group and to speak about it
- Jubilees – Queen’s Diamond Jubilee
- Royal Weddings – Street Parties and services
- Civic Services – perhaps more common in towns – but to celebrate the work of the parish council

### **Healing and Reconciliation**

- Reconciliation – develop creative and imaginative ways for churches to assist with reconciliation – perhaps for historic enmities, perhaps after Brexit