Parish of Neston

HOPE CARD REPORT

The Parish Fact Sheet concludes with two questions asking about goals in five years’ time and about areas most in need of improvement.

In order to answer, we pooled our existing knowledge with a comprehensive, innovative consultation introducing, in services, postcard-like Hope Cards inviting the worshipping community and wider to respond. Around 100 Cards expressing 322 ‘Hopes’ have been returned which is about 50 per cent.

The results were classified under headings: *Ethos, Unity & Purpose, Governance and Finance, Worship, Music, Mission Outreach and Community, Families, Children and Young People, Pastoral, Need for Change*, and then the PCC and Ministry Team working together undertook the difficult task of distilling the main messages.

You have to read the original to understand what is behind them and it will be available to the new incumbent. We imagine inviting candidates to speak about their approach to and experience of the findings. We also imagine opportunities for members to consider aspects in more detail.

To finish the process, we will share this list with congregations and then move to a consideration of the role description, person specification and the interview schedule.

**What are your current goals to achieve for the next five years?**

* We seek to build up the kingdom of God for everyone in Neston, understanding the challenges they face so we can engage with them and, with the collaboration of organisations outside our churches, including other churches, provide better practical support and assistance, especially for young people and families.
* We seek, to create a unifying Mission Plan, that places God, recognised in and through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Bible and in the Eucharist, at the heart of all we do, with the refreshment, leadership and collaboration of a new incumbent.
* We seek to become an inclusive Parish that accepts, welcomes everyone with kindness, respect, warmth and support, engaging with people wherever they are.
* We seek, amid talk of change, to take account of our current faithful congregations in matters of worship, recognising and building on the preferences, variations and innovations that already exist across the churches.
* We seek to be ready to make changes in what we do, including worship, and getting the specific leadership and resources required to manage change successfully.
* We seek to become a unified, not a uniform parish, recognising the diverse needs and circumstances of the people of Neston. This will require a variety of approaches, using the opportunities and flexibility provided by our assets, especially the three churches.
* We seek to grow our faith, individually and as a parish, through organised teaching and learning opportunities, to enhance, the skills, competence and confidence of people operating within the church and in the community.
* We seek to develop practices and approaches that appeal to younger and future generations in all aspects, whatever their circumstances.
* We seek to enlarge the worshipping community and reduce its age profile through attractive and appropriate worship and innovative projects that will draw in and retain people as they grow and develop in personal faith and, as well, increase potential givers.
* We seek conciliation and forgiveness for past hurts and awareness of them so we can learn lessons and move on without the past owning us.
* We seek the resources to develop and run a programme of pastoral care that people know how to call on and use.
* We seek to look further out, to our neighbours in the worldwide church.
* We seek to be well-run with an effective PCC, which supports our mission, run according to the law and best practice, with proper arrangements for delegation and accountability and a larger number and wider range of people in management, organisational and ministry roles.

* We seek through a Financial Plan to put the Parish on a more secure footing that does not depend on windfall legacies and gifts for core running costs.
* We seek to respect God’s creation in the way we care for our land and how we spend and invest our money.

**List the areas of church life that you feel are most in need of improvement.**

We know we are doing quite well keeping the Parish functioning at its present level though at some cost to individuals. With the assistance of visiting priests, services continue nearly normally, activities are taking place, pastoral care is available, physical assets are being looked after and money is properly managed. Yet almost everything needs improving if this parish is to survive, grow and meet the challenges of a rapidly-changing modern world.

In the short term, maybe the next year or two, we can flag up some things that we think are important:

* Simply rallying the congregations so people feel more encouraged, hopeful and united. Talking prayerfully about change and identifying opportunities for action in positive ways which engage with people’s hopes. We do believe that we need to start somewhere and, with God’s blessing, mighty oaks from little acorns grow.
* Prioritise teaching and organised learning at all levels to help people explore their faith and issues such as those described here.
* Identify what can be done now, in respect of worship, music, social activities and community work, that exemplifies a change of gear, especially where children and families are involved. Use our available development funds as seed corn finance.
* Spend more time on mission and less on administrative tasks: achieving that by improving how the PCC, the Standing Committee and the Ministry Team work; creating clear systems of delegation, accountability and communications, to free up time.
* Bring forward a younger generation of active people bearing in mind that many of those now in such roles are of such an age as to be retiring in the near future.

* Improve income, including planned giving, and introduce annual budgeting. Strengthen the capacity of the PCC to plan ahead and manage finances.

In the longer term, we recognise the worshipping community needs to grow to support its future mission in a context of demographic and cultural changes outwith our control.

Yet the picture is not universally negative. Some churches are growing in spite of it so there are lessons to be learned to inform our longer-term strategies. Once settled, we imagine that would be an early conversation with the incumbent.

Nationally, the Church of England is talking about new forms of church. Central funds are being redistributed in that direction which could operate to our advantage. We are well-placed, with three churches, when it comes to ‘new forms’; now our Bishops are looking at a Diocesan Plan, it is another conversation when the time is right.

8th June 2022

Neston PCC