

Response to Life-Giving Questions – Final Report

SECTION A – LOOKING AT OURSELVES

A1. Gathered Worship

We have all missed the chance to gather for worship in the church buildings. However, it is felt that we have successfully provided on-line alternatives and have opened the buildings when possible.

The responses collated on this are in Appendix A1 and include sections on:

- General
- Content
- On-line Services
- Physical Services

	Short term - Develop in 2021 under COVID-19 restrictions and beyond	Medium term – Plan in 2021 and implement in 2022-2024
Gathered Worship	<p>We have made significant strides in the delivery of on-line services.</p> <p>Continue with them, including training for in front and behind camera. Develop the ability to stream live services.</p> <p>It will be a continuing benefit to those who find it hard to get to church e.g. the elderly and families with children who play sport on Sunday morning.</p>	<p>Review pattern of services across the four churches in the parish, and the balance between the on-line offering and physical gatherings.</p> <p>Develop a specialism for each church which can be included in the on-line development programme</p> <p>Implement a programme of training for non-technical people, to enable them to access on-line services</p>
	<p>Initiatives like interviewing members of the congregation, or others who hold key roles in the community, help us to know each other better.</p> <p>We need to continue to work on this especially with respect to people’s skills and strengths so that they can serve in an appropriate area of church life.</p>	<p>Explore different types of church. Plans had started before the recent lockdown, e.g. outdoor worship</p>
	<p>Between lockdowns we were able to diversify what we offered. Despite limitations of now being solely on-line, we have worked at providing opportunities for worship that engage different ages and stages and will continue to do so.</p>	<p>Review the styles of worship we offer so that we have appeal for all segments, e.g. Youth, 20s and 30s, families with children and the elderly. We certainly need to be aware of the danger of being focused on a particular demographic. Look at the number, timing and content of the services. What do we offer for those who have to work at the weekend for instance?</p>
	<p>‘Gathered Worship’ should develop along lines not simply of church</p>	<p>Once churches have re-opened, we may need to have a sub-group of</p>

	attendance but 'gathered together' – creating a community working together. This was already being done via coffee mornings, coffee lounge at P and P, and Open House.	those involved to 'brainstorm' ideas for rejuvenation and look at the future of the physical services. Is it sustainable at 7 per week across the 4 churches alongside an on-line offering?
	Continue to have different ministers leading and preaching at Sunday Services, carrying on Marks' efforts to develop young people in this area.	

A2. Fellowship

It is evident from the responses that most people miss the fellowship of other parishioners, friends and family. The responses on this theme fell into the following categories (see Appendix A2):

- Sense of Being Family but not Knowing Everyone
- Home / Life Groups
- Nurturing Personal Relationships
- Hospitality

Many have found alternative ways to virtually meet people using Zoom and other on-line platforms. The ways to experience and develop fellowship is split between those we can do during the crisis, and those which will follow our release from lockdown.

	Short term - Develop in 2021 under COVID-19 restrictions and beyond	Medium term – Plan in 2021 and implement in 2022-2024
Fellowship	Continue to meet in Home Groups, as Stepping Stones, Living Stones, Men’s Forum etc, and provide care and support for those in the groups particularly those unable to take part electronically.	After lockdown, look to re-introduce the Hospitality theme started before the crisis.
	Zoom coffee meeting after the service for those who want to meet others in the parish.	After lockdown, re-start social gatherings both within the parish, and those to which we can invite the wider community, e.g. quiz and barn dance.
	Helping people to become part of a home group to grow in faith and belonging is a priority for us, and we’re actively seeking ways to grow the groups and establish more	Review all the types of groups in the Leaders Matrix and see if there are opportunities for rationalisation.
	Living Stones has begun with 6 groups so far, supporting one another through sharing in prayer, scripture and looking at where their gifts are and how individuals can be involved in the life of the parish.	

A3. Self-Awareness and Life Balance

There were many responses on awareness of self and world around us, contemplation and prayer enabled by a period of lockdown and a reduction in activities. Many felt that the focus on these should be continued. The responses fell into the following categories. There are many examples of each of these in Appendix A3:

- Spending Time with God – ‘Quiet Time’
- Awareness of Life and Creation
- Awareness of God
- Reduce ‘Busyness’
- Prayer
- Repentance
- Other Responses

	Short term - Develop in 2021 under COVID-19 restrictions and beyond	Medium term – Plan in 2021 and implement in 2022-2024
Self-awareness & Life Balance	Identify and co-ordinate the prayer groups across the parish. Many have commented on the time provided by COVID-19 for prayer and reflection.	Establish patterns for people to follow in terms of personal and group prayer and ensure focus for the content of the prayers. Provide guidance on private and group prayer, and on private and group bible study.
	Keep under review the need to open the churches for private prayer, as soon as possible.	If these Life-Giving Responses and initiatives are going to be sustainable, they need a foundation of a period spent waiting on the Holy Spirit. People will not find the energy if they are not convinced are God’s will and that God has a job for them to do. And if we have not, as a church family, spent time with the Lord asking Him what His plan for each of us is, the same people will be, once again, doing multiple jobs.
	People searching for answers - New Alpha course just started. Review afterwards how much uptake there has been. Should we have other “soft” outreach initiatives or look at more forthright outreach services? Do people feel those would be effective in the current climate? Are people looking for answers to life questions more at the moment?	Review all the activities that we try to support during ‘normal’ times and the resources we allocate to them. Limit the number so that we can reduce the ‘busyness’ of some in the parish, enabling them to give more time to fewer, better-targeted initiatives.
	Is there scope for ‘Youth Alpha’?	Whole-self programmes. Look at what is out there in the Christian and secular worlds and if there is a need, see if any can be introduced in the parish. Define the Christian attitude to Mindfulness and well-being
		Introduce Spiritual mentors

SECTION B – LOOKING OUTWARDS

B1. Community

It is evident from the volume and strength of the comments received that there is a huge desire amongst the parishioners to do more in the community, both pastorally and with the wider population of North Tonbridge. There are so many comments on this theme that the responses have been grouped as below. If you read no other appendix, please read this one.

- General
 - a) Community Hub / Action
 - b) Exploiting the Massive Surge in Volunteers
 - c) Faith in Action
- Delivery
 - a) Food Larder/FEAST
 - b) Open House
 - c) Coffee Lounge
 - d) Open the Church Buildings
 - e) Alpha
 - f) Engagement Across the Churches, Community Groups and Other Agencies
 - g) Walking Groups
- Segments Cohorts
 - a) Mental Health
 - b) The Elderly
 - c) The 20 Somethings
 - d) The Unemployed, the Homeless and the Hard-up
 - e) Local Business
 - f) The Self-employed
 - g) Young people
 - h) The Lonely and the Isolated
- Other Responses
 - a) We have an identity apart from the church community we are in, of the role we have in the wider community
 - b) Other Thoughts and Ideas

	Short term - Develop in 2021 under COVID-19 restrictions and beyond	Medium term – Plan in 2021 and implement in 2022-2024
Community	Develop existing TPC community activities, for example FEAST and Open House. We did have half term and holiday events during lockdown of cooking and delivering takeaway meals to FEAST families from St Philips and will develop FEAST projects like cooking workshops (ideally through Open House) and resume FEAST lunches in the holidays when restrictions permit.	Review other areas of need in community in conjunction with other churches and support groups. Do we offer more social welfare activities, with an aim of reaching a greater proportion of the community? Identify the needs of the cohorts and how we could support them. Select a small number into which we invest our time, effort and money to be more effective, and not spread resources too thinly.

	Re-open Coffee bar and Open House and FEAST meals	Decide if the Coffee Bar can be used to provide a meals service during the week.
	The plan to set up St Philips as a Community Larder is postponed because of the logistics of moving food from where it is delivered at TMC. This may happen but further out.	Re-engage with the uniformed groups
	Support those with mental health issues and Dementia – Mental Health First Aid training course completed by several members of staff	
	Alpha On-line – course run in Autumn 2020 and another is ongoing	
	Walking Groups – continue as allowed under government restrictions. Train a team to provide 'health walks'	Set up a range of walking groups, including ones for those who would like to meet new people in the parish, or just want to be socialble

B2. Pastoral Care

Initially Pastoral Care was included in Community section above, but there was such a high volume of responses that this topic pulled out to form a section of its own. The responses in Appendix B2 cover:

- The Call Contact System
- Support for Different Demographics – Elderly, Families, Singles, 20s and 30s, Youth and Children
- Pastoral Care (Caring for & serving each other – men, women, young families, sick and bereaved)
- Whole person health, especially mental health
- Technical Help for Non-tech People
- Financial Support

	Short term - Develop in 2021 under COVID-19 restrictions and beyond	Medium term – Plan in 2021 and implement in 2022-2024
Community	Develop the Contact database to help identify those who need most support and monitor how that support is being provided. Review how the database is used and analyse how we can best support individual needs	Assess the options for Life Events system and the Contacts Database in order to build a full Customer/Client Management System (as they are known in business)
	Explore advertising the pastoral care we offer and expanding the panel of people who help with it. There may be many more people in the congregation suitable for the task.	Provide training and guidance for new people getting involved in pastoral care roles, explaining what is expected of them, e.g. a church friend rather than a social worker.

	Keep half-termly calls to families with children to check on pastoral care needs and that they have access to everything the parish has in place for children and young people	Develop a support plan for each of the demographics listed above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly • Sick and bereaved • Families / parents • Singles • 20s and 30s • Youth • Children
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B3. National and Global Issues

The crisis has enabled many people to reflect on the inequality and injustices in the world and wish to address some of these both during the pandemic and beyond. This is one of the sections in Appendix B3, along with responses on the Environment, Poverty and other National Issues.

	Short term – Develop in 2021 under COVID-19 restrictions and beyond	Medium term – Plan in 2021 and implement in 2022-2024
Issues - Local and National	Recycling and 'green' issues – made some headway ?? Examples	Plan for the 'greener' heating and lighting of our church buildings. Source electricity from non-fossil fuels. Switch to alternative heating sources like 'heat pumps'
	Look at the short-term financial needs of parishioners hit by the crisis. Some of these have been addressed by the Vicar's Discretionary fund. Look at ways to subsidise this fund during the crisis	Develop a plan of how we, as a church, can start to address injustice and inequality in society, both locally and nationally. This may be some sort of prayer/action/lobby group who take this on as a task and develop a number of initiatives that the church can address and support.
		Meet with other local churches and support groups to identify the greatest community needs and pinpoint the ones the parish can help to address, e.g. Debt Advice
		Meet with the Diocesan Community Engagement Social Action Lead and identify if we can help in Tonbridge with housing the homeless

SECTION C - COMMON THEMES

C1 - General

These general items have been pulled together from the list of responses and from amalgamating repeating themes from the different sections, e.g. the use and future of the four church buildings and the importance of communication within the parish and into the community, when so much is going on.

	Short term - Develop in 2021 under COVID-19 restrictions and beyond	Medium term – Plan in 2021 and implement in 2022-2024
General	Develop information cascade through home groups and pastoral arrangements. Continue to use website and social media for dissemination of information, resources etc around the parish and community. New monthly on-line and hard-copy Notice Sheet	Explore ways of improving communications across the parish, the community and with other organisations. We should liaise with other churches in Tonbridge, and other churches with similar structure to ours which may be able to advise, for example, on how to solve the 7-services-on-a-Sunday issue, and how to diversify services. We should reach out to other agencies we might work with. Investigate, define and (if appropriate) fill a role for a Communications Manager to ensure we are reaching the right people with the right message at the right time.
	Keep signposting the need for financial giving, so we can sustain our operations and buildings.	As we have several buildings, how do we maintain both a sense of belonging and being one church? Decide on the future of four buildings - between retaining as places of worship or providing a different role in the community. Do we need the same number of buildings if we have a sustained on-line presence? What are the advantages/ disadvantages of the current physical model? How disruptive/ upsetting would it be to make change in this area? Would a reduction lead to too much discord?
	Maintain good communication across leadership, including leaders of groups. Promote visibility of leaders across the whole parish. Leadership teams to meet together from time-to-time to help build parish-wide relationships	Ensure leaders of cross parish groups and activities, as well as clergy team, are seen in all buildings.

	We need to be aware of the danger of being focused on a particular demographic, as we believe that the Gospel has universal appeal and relevance.	How widespread is the feeling is that we are a “middle class” church? Parish churches are often seen as having some relevance to the community as a whole, but are often not attracting certain sections of their populations. The issue is often that relevance is limited to christenings, weddings and funerals,. The challenge is how do we work from that base?
	Within current and future prayer opportunities, include prayer for implementation of the Life-Giving Questions initiatives.	Teaching on topics relevant to various initiatives as they are rolled out. Encourage church members to think and pray about their own involvement.
		Assess the balance between the use of resources on activities that are focussed on ‘Looking at Ourselves’ and on those that are ‘Looking Outwards’. Develop and agree a split of the finances and other resources for the LGQ initiatives.

C2. What is Church?

The pandemic has given many of us the time to reflect on what church is, what it means to us, and what it should be in the future. There were a significant number of responses on this theme – see Appendix C2.

The responses fell into the following categories:

- What is Church?
- The Crisis
- Opportunity
- How it is Viewed – Internal
- How it is Viewed – External
- Change our Attitude
- The Buildings
- Steps to Develop
- Sections of Society
- Outcome

Some of the actions are included in the General section above.

	Short term - Develop in 2021 under COVID-19 restrictions and beyond	Medium term – Plan in 2021 and implement in 2022-2024
What is Church?	Identify and collate the aspects of the church which have continued in lockdown. Many of these are described in the other sections of this report. See if there are areas which have ‘fallen through the cracks’, and address them now, or include them in the medium term plans.	Review the balance between a Sunday church and a seven day one. Set out the type of church we are for worship and life events, and what we are doing during the week in fellowship, pastoral care and community work. Communicate the activities we perform during the week.
	The question of ‘What is Church?’ should be put to the younger elements of our parish (under 30), and see if that differs, and how we might meet their desires	Seize the opportunity to re-think, re-assess and repent, then plan and develop a vision of what church is and what it entails and comprises. Communicate the results and obtain feedback from the parishioners. From the feedback develop a vision and mission with plans for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Manpower • Community • Outreach • Each Cohort • Publicity Include many of the actions contained in this report.