

Deanery Synod Meeting 9-03-23 HOW (VILLAGE) CHURCHES SURVIVE

1. Extending a warm welcome

- If you want to grow you may need to change
- How to make your church as welcoming as your home
- Why structuring your welcome around strangers, rather than those who are already friends is key

2. Making the most of life events

- The link between life events and faith journeys, and how you can amplify this
- Ways to involve lots of people from the church in this ministry and mission
- The vital importance of keeping in touch with new contacts

3. Using buildings creatively

- Your ancient church buildings are a huge asset, just the way they are
- Your buildings provide limitless creative opportunities to connect with your (village) community, and welcome them into the church space, and even into the life of the church
- There are ways to share the responsibility and cost of caring for your buildings more widely across the community

4. Caring for God's acre

- Why churchyards draw people and how you can build on their interest
- How you can engage the whole community in the love and care of your churchyard
- Churchyards can be a visible expression of one of the Church of England's five marks of mission: *'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew life on earth'*

5. Being the heartbeat of a (village) community

- How your church can effect positive change in (village) community life
- How the 'Body of Christ' described by St Paul can be a helpful picture of community engagement
- Why community audits are important and how our church can lead one

6. Celebrating our heritage

- The heritage of church buildings presents a great opportunity for churches to build relationships with new people
- Church heritage is both locally embedded and extremely broad – it has something for everyone
- New technologies are providing new ways to present churches to people who visit and those further afield

7. Cultivating fruitful festivals

- With its strong sense of community and its greater awareness of the countryside, the rural church has a unique contribution to bring to its worship
- When the church gathers for worship, genuine encounters with God can happen, and spirituality, faith and discipleship are nurtured
- The gospel is Good News, and festivals provide ideal opportunities to celebrate, to be innovative and creative, and to welcome others

8. Welcoming more children

- Why engaging with younger people is a priority for the Church of England in the 2020s
- Why village settings can offer great opportunities for creative ministry with children
- How collaboration with others in the (rural) community can help boost funding for children's work

9. Reaching the isolated and the lonely

- What 'isolation' really means and who is likely to be most affected
- What the challenges and opportunities are for (rural) churches to be a part of the solution
- How to initiate outreach to those most in need

10. Communicating effectively

- How communications can help you reach wider audiences
- The three key things you must think about before starting any communications
- How to set up and manage some commonly used communications channels