

## **What gifts is God calling us to use and develop as part of His mission in our Parish? A report on the Listening to God TOGETHER event held at St Paul's on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

A group of more than thirty from St Paul's met in the Parish Rooms on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May with the intention that each "table" would consider the above question in the light of the previously circulated reports on the three PMC listening activities and of **Philippians 1:27, 2:5-11**. In the context of that morning's Thanksgiving service and sermon we hoped that the connection would also be made with all the good gifts that God gives us, both as individuals and as a church: all those talents and skills, physical possessions, and spiritual gifts for the equipping of the saints for ministry (see, for example, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and Romans 12).

Naturally, each group came up with different ways of approaching the questions and with a range of different answers! However, it is fair to say that the one gift recognised by every group as being there to be used and developed is the church community itself, the people of St Paul's, young and old, expert and tentative, nervous and assured, longing to be welcoming and supportive and caring. Various suggestions as to how to develop this great gift will be explored in the weeks and months ahead.

Another widely recognised gift is our "plant" – our church building, the churchyard and the Parish Rooms – with all the possibilities for outreach that it offers. The gifts of evangelism, prayer and worship, and the love of our Lord Jesus Himself were mentioned less frequently.

Not specifically highlighted in the conclusions reached on the day, but clear from the Congregational interviews, the Timeline event and/or the Data profile are 1) the importance and value placed on the opportunities for, and style of, worship at St Paul's; 2) the great blessing of the care and leadership of our priests; and 3) the involvement of many members in networks and activities in the wider community.

It is our hope that the airing and sharing of thoughts and opinions that day will not be an isolated event but that we, as a parish and as diverse congregations, will grow in our ability and confidence to listen well to each other and to God, sharing our faith and our beliefs with one another – all in preparation for reaching out to do the same as we share God's love with and in the wider community of Wokingham.

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