

Themes emerging from PMC Congregational interviews October/November 2015

In the interviews at St Paul's the Listeners asked the people they interviewed to talk about how people participate in the life of St Paul's, about the learning opportunities here, about how they and others feel about changes in the congregation in the past 3 to 5 years and about the ways people fight and how a problem they were involved in was handled. They were also asked to describe an experience of profound worship, how they sense God's presence and activity in this congregation and how they would describe to someone new the congregation and how they would be nurtured here. Finally they were asked to recount a memory that gives them anxiety about the future of this congregation and one that gives them hope.

These questions were intended to encourage those interviewed to talk about their experiences of life and work at St Paul's, recalling times and places, emotions and even specific words, to help us understand our church as we seek to recognise what God is already doing among us and what he may be calling us to. The Steering team would like to thank all who agreed to take part and who offered their thoughts and memories so honestly.

The report we have received from the team of external Readers has highlighted a number of strengths, among them:

- ✚ We see ourselves as a friendly and welcoming church with a real sense of family/community and active participation – every interviewee identified at least one way in which people participate in the life of the church
- ✚ Sunday services, festivals, music and worship are well done and are important to us (51% of responses about experiences of profound worship cited specific festival services such as Christmas or Easter)
- ✚ There is a sense of hope and joy about the perceived growth in the number of young families and children attending St Paul's more regularly

Some of the points emerging as opportunities for focus and improvement include

- ✚ management and communication of change
- ✚ learning opportunities, particularly for teenagers (and the "advertising" thereof)
- ✚ awareness of God's activity – we recognise His presence in our Church but seem less able to see (and talk about) where and how He is at work
- ✚ expression and recognition of negative emotions; acknowledgement of disagreement or conflict and its resolution

We have much to be grateful for – and among those things is the way in which God is calling and equipping us for the future together which he has prepared for us. And that is what PMC is all about.