

The Bansfield Benefice Survey 2010

The survey ran from the 7th March until the 30th June 2010. In total 52 people answered the survey. Mainly this survey was directed at the inhabitants of the seven villages of the benefice but because it was advertised on the home page of the benefice website people beyond the benefice also completed the survey.

The questions were drawn up by Stephen and Anne Abbott and ratified by the Bansfield Benefice committee at its meeting prior to 7th March 2010.

The full survey results are shown on the following pages. In question five names were redacted to keep the contributor's name anonymous and spelling mistakes were corrected.



**1. Do any of the following make you reluctant to/ prevent you from attending Church?
Please tick any items you feel applies to you. Feel free to add different ideas or comment
on any of these at the end of the questionnaire.**

Response	percent	count
My Sunday mornings are taken up with other activities/family/relaxation.	28.8%	15
I do not know anyone who goes to Church and would not want to go on my own.	1.9%	1
I do not think the style of worship would appeal to me.	7.7%	4
I am not sure that the people would be very friendly.	3.8%	2
The people there might think they are better than me.	1.9%	1
I have had a bad experience of Church in the past.	0.0%	0
I have young children and might be embarrassed by their behaviour in such a formal setting.	3.8%	2
Churches are often cold and uncomfortable and there are no toilet facilities.	19.2%	10
There is no proper provision for children generally.	7.7%	4
The sermons might be too long/boring.	13.5%	7
I don't like 'Churchy' language.	5.8%	3
I don't like most 'Churchy' music.	3.8%	2
I don't like having to sit still and quiet for so long without involvement.	5.8%	3
I am not sure what is going on for some or all of the time.	5.8%	3
I get lost trying to follow the service and/or am not sure what to do at Communion and am self-conscious about it.	7.7%	4
I come out of many services feeling more depressed than when I came in.	9.6%	5
I can't see what good the Church does in the world today. It is much more fulfilling to support a charity and its activities.	3.8%	2
The age and small numbers of other Churchgoers depress me.	19.2%	10
My friends would think I was mad if I came.	0.0%	0
You do not have to go to Church to be a Christian, and I do not feel it has anything to offer me, or that I have anything to offer the Church.	9.6%	5
I know a lot more obviously Christian people outside the Church than within it.	9.6%	5
Community worship has no place in the life of a 21st century Christian. We should be concentrating solely on work in the community.	0.0%	0
It is very difficult for me to get to Church.	0.0%	0
None of the above.	44.2%	23
Answered question		52
Skipped question		0

2. Please tick any of the following which you might be interested in attending. Again, please feel free to add different ideas or comment on any of these at the end of the questionnaire.

Response	percent	count
Services with modern music/instruments.	31.4%	16
Services where modern, everyday language is used.	29.4%	15
Services at different times and in different places with better facilities.	25.5%	13
Pram services where you will not be the only one bringing babies or young children!	7.8%	4
Pet services where you can bring along some of your favourite family members without fear of disapproval!	19.6%	10
Services with a creche facility, possibly followed by coffee, squash and biscuits.	9.8%	5
A 'Children's Corner' /pewbags with quiet toys to help entertain the children during the service.	9.8%	5
Teaching Eucharists (a Communion service where the priest explains everything that is happening.)	23.5%	12
Healing Eucharists (a Communion service focussing on prayers for all kinds of healing for ourselves or for others. During the service, those who would find it helpful can go to a side Chapel or somewhere unobtrusive to be annointed with oil by the priest and exchange a few words with him/her. This is a quiet, devotional service where we do not expect instant and dramatic answers to our prayers, and nobody needs to leave their pew if they do not wish to!)	11.8%	6
All Souls' Eucharist (as above focussing on remembering, and praying for, loved ones we have lost . Those who wish to, may have the names of those who have died read out during the service. Again, if you prefer just to be present, that is fine.)	13.7%	7
A course for enquirers about the faith, those who wish to learn more about their existing faith, or those who are not sure how they feel.	19.6%	10
Messy Church (children's worship based on a very practical learning experience and absolutely no formality!)	15.7%	8
Coffee mornings with 'surgeries', run by members of the ministry team.	13.7%	7
None of the above.	31.4%	16
Answered question		51
Skipped question		1

3. Please indicate whether you might like to be involved in any of the following:

Response	percent	count
Benefice choir/music group	33.3%	17
Flower arranging	23.5%	12
Cleaning and maintenance	43.1%	22
Sewing/restoration of vestments etc	9.8%	5
Drama/dance in worship	7.8%	4
Youth fellowship group - Member	0.0%	0
Youth fellowship group - helper	2.0%	1
Youth fellowship group - leader	0.0%	0
None of the above	39.2%	20
Answered question		51
Skipped question		1

4. With which village, if any, do you feel you are associated?

Response	percent	count
Cowlinge	3.9%	2
Denston	9.8%	5
Lidgate	15.7%	8
Ousden	13.7%	7
Stansfield	13.7%	7
Stradishall	13.7%	7
Wickhambrook	21.6%	11
None of the above	7.8%	4
Answered question		51
Skipped question		1

5. Finally please include any comment you might like to add in regard to any of the above questions or indeed any general comments you might to add. If you have indicated you might like to help with any of the activities in Question 3, then we would be keen for you to contact us through our email address contact@bansfieldbenefice.org.uk

1. I do attend church services when my health allows - normally in my own parish where the BCP form is the only one I like. I have no criticisms of the existing arrangements though I realise some of these suggestions might be helpful. As long as I attend BCP services in my own parish I am happy.
2. I think the services could do with being a little more lighthearted and maybe humorous.
3. I already do help with activities in Question 3.
Most of what is offered in question 2 would prevent me from attending church and would alienate most if not all of your present congregations. You would need to have many more services to cater for the diversity. We do need to attract more people to attend but not at the expense of those who already are stalwarts of the church.
4. I prefer the book of Common Worship which is not used in Stradishall.
5. The services are too low church for the type of worship in which we are interested
6. I attend such services as Harvest Festival and the Christmas Carol Service as part of the village community but otherwise I am not a church attender. However, I do regard the church as an important focal point for the village.
7. I already attend other churches on a regular basis.
8. The benefice is too large and needs to be more village orientated . The priest is too remote to cover the parishes. less money on bishops and heirachy.
9. I do go to Lidgate Church very occasionally, but with a young family I almost always have to be doing something with the children and if not I have a list of other things that need doing. In these hectic times people have less and less free time.
10. Church should be more of a jolly place to go.
11. The community should be encourage to become more involved in the church and appreciate the heritage that could be lost to the future generations.
12. I do like a traditional Church service - I'm not keen on "modern" versions of traditional texts nor modern hymns/music. I like charismatic and interesting vicars. Early morning services are also preferable. Children and young families should be encouraged to come to church, but not to the detriment of a time of peace and contemplation for other church goers. Maybe the reintroduction of Sunday School (separate to the main service) could facilitate this - the children wouldn't be bored and restless in the regular service, and normal churchgoers wouldn't have their worship spoilt or interrupted. I guess I'm an old fashioned traditionalist! Like many others I would hate to see the village church deteriorate in any way, and I believe some of the Church of England costs it is obliged to meet seem disproportionate and unreasonable. Thanks for carrying out this survey!
13. I already attend church regularly so already take an active part in church life. It would be nice if we could have a bit more 'hands on' support from the rest of the community too though.

14. Q1. I like to go to church, I need to go to church and I want to go to church, so I feel no reluctance in going to church. Q2. In principle I prefer minimal peripheral distractions (pets etc) to the service but would want to support the efforts of my church in any form of service that helps it reach out to a wider congregation. That said, it's possible to have bespoke services to attract special congregations-and any combination and in any frequencies in between.
15. I would appreciate it if we could have a rota for coffee etc, rather than one person doing it all the time.
16. I used to go to church regularly but not now. I find the church music here is poor to the point of being off putting. The church leadership and members here seem to be remote and out of touch with ordinary people. I don't understand the service lists in the magazine - what do all the initials mean? How can there be two numbers on the service book pages? Church here seems to be more about preserving an old building and less about caring for the local people.
17. I love our church as a building but am deeply saddened by the state of the 'Church' as an institution in our local villages. It has virtually lost touch with the lives of ordinary people and if it is to stand any chance of reversing those sharply declining fortunes it must do two things (and they do not include reverting to 'happy clappy' services - like the dreadful one which is inflicted every year on people before Paul and Sue Long's wonderful BBQ). It has to reconnect with villagers in their every day lives. That will require inspirational leadership and getting involved in community events and, to use a modern phrase, looking 'outside the box.' Currently the local church appears remote and (with the exception of marriages, baptism, funerals and the carol service) an irrelevance. You only have to see what can be achieved in other parishes where an inspirational clergyman (or, more often, clergywoman) has moved in or where the churchwardens have gone energy, ideas and some oomph, to realise it is not a totally lost cause. People make the difference.
So, please escape from the over-bureaucratic regulation that is now the Church of England (eg don't use very expensive CofE approved surveyors or builders to do the work), and get out there and get to know villagers. Until now, you have been talking to yourselves - ie about half a dozen people in each village.
18. Connected with more than one village! Mostly Lidgate, Cowlinge and Wickhambrook but had to vote none to move on
19. For us, and possibly a significant number of people, a slightly later start to Sunday morning services, say 10.00am, would be attractive. Living a rushed life from Monday to Friday, and constantly trying to 'beat the clock', the thought of setting the alarm clock again for a Sunday morning can be off-putting at times and for some people would be a reason not to go at all. We think the survey is a very good idea and hope it's a success.
20. The church has few younger adults in the congregation and even fewer families. I feel the church as a whole needs to encourage more people into the regular services, if the local churches are going to survive. This has no straightforward solution, but I believe solving this problem would bring new vibrancy and energy into the church.
21. I already help clean the Church and take a turn on the flower rota at Wickhambrook.
22. I think that the church in Wickhambrook will continue to die until it is seen as a living, active part of the community. Nice services in beautiful buildings and prayer are not enough to attract people.

The clergy must be seen out and about in the community and taking an active part in it.

This cannot be left to lay members, however unrealistic a benefice of seven parishes is.

We will never get wider support or involvement, nor the necessary money to run the church, until it is seen to be relevant to busy lives and, visibly, part of it.

23. I want to be part of a vibrant worshipping community. One that will help me to grow in faith & service. One that, following an act of worship & teaching, will have strengthened me to engage in today's world. ("being in the world, but not of the world").
24. I believe that the church should have a modern approach and attract families with young children back into the congregation, if the younger generation are taught the value religion has then they will grow and support the church. Society today has a negative thought about church because Religion has a bad press, with wars and inappropriate behaviour of a minority of priests and vicars it's made a mockery of religion. Therefore we have to persuade people to rejoin and learn church is more than people running on about religion in odd speak, it's about community and respect, also a good friendship base. I like to go to church but due to working on a Sunday its not easy to fit it in, An hour is too long for the services, I think 30 minutes and then a cup of tea and a chat for those who wish too would be perfect.
Also the vicar needs to put himself out there and have a garden party and get to know his congregation better - that would really help.
25. Although I realise it is difficult, the real lack of interest in the church is caused, in my opinion by lack of visiting. Those who do not go to church have little opportunity to know who the vicar is. Perhaps it could be possible to have a coffee or tea time, gathering a small group together to meet the vicar?
26. I believe that our village would benefit from using the church more often for a wider variety of events that are not solely based upon the bible and prayer. What a waste of a fine building to have it under-utilised & left cold/damp most of the time! This marries up with my previous comment about churches on the whole being cold and austere places to which people of the modern world are not drawn, despite the fact that this austerity (I've no doubt) should help us remember what other people have suffered in pursuit of their faith or their unselfish desire to help others. However, this is SO far removed from modern society and people have short memories! I behave in a Christian way and treat my family, friends and neighbours with respect and kindness. This basic philosophy does not have to be reinforced every Sunday morning! Sadly but truthfully, the teachings of the bible are far removed from the pace and rhythm of my life. Both my husband) & I are just not motivated to attend church services like we used to as children. However, we do partake in the major religious festivals and help the church raise funds at those events.
27. I feel that services which only follow the "book" are sterile and unthinking. I think that a closer link between science and faith would be interesting - I am not interested at all in "blind faith" and need good robust explanations for phenomena. Virgin births and "rising from the dead" hold no place in modern life, BUT much of the general teaching such as tolerance and care for others and our planet are to be whole heartedly supported. Maybe I could never be a Christian but I would not wish to deter those who are.
28. The Rector needs to be seen amongst the villagers not just in church.
29. I feel we need to centralize if the church in rural areas is to survive and be effective in its mission and outreach.

This open question had responses from 29 people.