



Partnership for Missional Church
Listening Portfolio

October 2018

Partnership for Missional Church : Listening Portfolio

These worksheets that make up the listening portfolio give an opportunity to pay attention to what God might be saying to us through ourselves, others in our community, our history, our context and cultures. It's not primarily about finding data and filling in the boxes, it's about listening to the voice of the Spirit, about paying attention to what God is showing us from the hard work of research. Reflecting on what you notice from the data you collect in the Steering Team will be vital for discovering God's preferred and promised future for you. There are helpful questions for you to ponder in each section to help you with this work. One principle needs to be understood by the Steering Team - the more information you collect across all the sections, the more you interpret it and make sense of it, the clearer will your understanding be of what God is doing amongst you and how you are being sent by God in your community.

Between the Listening 1 and Listening 2 events worksheets 1 (this one), 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 (the Listening Team interviews conducted by the Lead Listeners) are completed. The Community Interviews (worksheet 8) will hopefully be started before the Listening 2 event, and should be completed along with the remaining worksheets in advance of Listening 3 Event. In addition to the information recorded here, it is helpful to keep a record of any supporting documentation (such as your Statistics for Mission data or Parish Spotlight) as separate files. Together with the summary of your Timeline event (top of worksheet 6), these will all help you to "arrive where you are" in advance of Year Two and identifying your adaptive missional challenge. In each worksheet you decide what is the minimum amount of knowledge you need to discern what God is up to there. Once you have completed as many of the worksheets as you can and reflected upon them you will need to prepare a summary of your learning to share with the congregation, this could be in many formats depending on your preference.

If you are engaged in Partnership for Missional Church as a team or benefice, you will need to consider before starting whether to complete these questions for each congregation/church or as a one larger group(s) of churches. There are no hard and fast rules, it's about paying attention to God, however in our experience the more you complete this process together the more God might bring you together with a sense of common vision and calling. If you do complete the congregational interviews as one then you will need to decide how many of the 24 to complete in each congregation.

In addition to these worksheets, your diocesan office can gladly supply geographical maps, and other information which may be of use. Do contact them for more.

Name and physical address of Church, Parish or Benefice:

Holy Trinity Prestwood, Wycombe Road, Prestwood, Great Missenden, Bucks HP16 0HJ

If you have a congregational mission or vision statement, please add it below. If you do not please state that it does not yet exist:

As a parish church our mission is to make God's love known and real to the people of Prestwood & Great Kingshill. As a worshipping community we aim to be a special and proper place of encounter between God and his people, and inclusive, supportive and welcoming to all.

Three questions for your Steering Team to discuss, in light of the above:

What is this congregation's community - is it defined by a parish boundary/ies or something else?

What do you think of when you see the name of the congregation? What images from the Bible or elsewhere come to mind?

How does the location of the congregation help it participate in what God is up to in its community?

The congregation is not defined by the parish boundary. We could all name families who attended church who were local but lived outside the boundary. Some people travel to the church because they like the style of the service.

One of the steering committee is reminded of Isaiah Chp 6. Also reminded of the Holy Trinity icon by Rublev

We don't see the location of the church helps participation in what is happening in the community - in fact the reverse.

Notes on printing and saving

This Listening Portfolio can be printed or turned into a PDF both as individual worksheets or as a whole.

When saving below the file name it should offer you 'Save as type' (the exact wording varies between different versions of Excel). From the drop down bar select PDF

When printing to print just one worksheet select 'Print Active Sheets'. To print the whole Listening Portfolio select 'Print Entire Workbook' from the drop down bar. Again exact wording may vary version to version but if in doubt select Help!

2. Demographic and Deprivation data

Download your Parish Dashboards from here <http://www.oxford.anglican.org/census-data/> (in Leicester) or by contacting your diocesan office in other dioceses. Use the following questions to reflect on what the Spirit might be saying to you:

What stands out or surprises you? (up to three things)

Christmas attendance was growing until 2010, and then seems to drop off quite dramatically (Later found out that apparently this is due to differences in the recording of the numbers in latter years [the crib service has not been added in with Christmas numbers for some reason]- with these added in actual attendance has remained around 500)

Numbers of leavers and joiners seems to balance

Proportion of worshippers in the 70+ age group is noticeably growing

What encourages you? (for example, where an existing ministry meets a need)

Although average weekly attendance has dropped from a high in 2009, the trend showing in the last three years is that the attendance is growing

What challenges you?

The age demographics of the parish community compared to the congregation

What potential 'people of peace' are highlighted in this report? What relationships, if any, do you have with groups or organisations in the community?

Since the reordering of the church building, it has become a much more attractive space to the wider community. A local cinema club has been renting the church to show films, which brings a new group of people to the church. There are good links with other organisations including preschool, local groups and societies who rent our premises. More details on the Building & Travel tab.

Does the congregation/s reflect the community it is set in? What are the reasons this might or might not be so?

In terms of ethnicity, yes. In terms of age profile, no. There is a general move away from religion, and the church is seen as less relevant to every day life

What might God be doing in your community now you have learnt more about it? How, if at all are you participating in this movement of God? How might you participate more?

What is the story you will tell someone having read this data?

Like other churches in the area, attendance is generally in decline. Religion is generally not featuring strongly in peoples' lives.

3. Building Use and Travel

Write a 300 word narrative about the use of the church building (and any others owned by the congregation) and how it/they affects the life of the congregation. If there is a church hall and/or dual use in the church include this usage, talk to some of the users about their experience of using the building/s. What is the average 'footfall' per week and what is the occupancy as a % of what is possible? What relationships exist with other user organisations, if any, or are they just seen as income generation? How does this church see the use of its building as participating in the mission of God?

Since the reordering project, the church building is used not only for worship, but by other groups in the village. It is now a concert venue, and is used by a local cinema club for film showings. The church buildings also consist of the church hall (which was originally the village school until 1908) and the church cottage (originally the headmaster's house). The church hall has been used for many years by the pre-school, and it and the church cottage are used fairly regularly for meetings. The preschool rent the church hall 4.5 days a week during term time - this includes tuesday, wednesday and thursday evenings.

Table tennis group use the hall for free on Monday evenings, Pot luck lunch use the hall for free on the first Friday of the month.

The hall was hired out for private birthday parties 15 times and 3 times for post baptism gatherings.

We also hosted the AGM and EGG show of the poultry society. We have also let lighthouse use it for 4 preparation meetings

One choir rehearsal - Damon singers, 1 diamond wedding celebration, 1 murder mystery party, 1 post memorial service reception

For one week last summer hired out a venue for a kid's summer music club and final performance in the church

The cottage has been booked out for Guitar lessons - little strummers (weekly in term time) and they use the back benches in the church, 10 spirituality courses by Pelagos, rock music tuition weekly in termtime - as a break out room from the church activities.

The church has been hired for 2 meetings by the conservative society, 1 meeting with Missenden local area forum, Little strummer concert – once, Prestwood area community transport AGM, Vintage cinema have shown 3 screenings (and have now ceased as we didn't get large enough attendees)

Damon singers - 2 rehearsals, Damon singers - 1 concert, Sound Spa - 1 evening of meditation, 2 wreath making courses - Daisy's flowers, 1 funeral wake, Rock Music tuition - weekly in term time, male voice choir Knights of Harmony - one rehearsal

We have also had church events like afternoon tea for Christian aid, reception for Nigel's ordination, 2 concerts the church has organised and hosting of the AVS barbeque. We also run a weekly term time toddler group in the church. Later this year it will be hired as a wedding reception venue as well

How accessible is the church by a) car b) foot c) public transport:

The church is situated approximately 1 mile from the centre of the village. It is accessible by foot (for those able to walk that sort of distance) and by car. There are bus stops right by the church, being served by buses from Aylesbury & High Wycombe.

Is there good access for people with disabilities?

Since the refurbishment there is good access for wheelchair users and others with restricted mobility or disabilities

What on-street and off-street car parking spaces/availability are there? Does this limit the number of people who could attend? Are neighbours affected by this situation?

There is a main carpark which accommodates approximately 30 cars. There is an overflow carpark which can accommodate about a further 15 cars. At very busy times, the church can negotiate further parking with a local business. Otherwise on street parking takes place, which does upset the neighbours.

Describe the picture as you stand at the main entrance of the church and you are looking outwards? What is striking? Are there any public buildings in view? What is the Church's relationship with them?

Standing at the main entrance looking out, one can see gravestones, hedges and grass. Generally no buildings are in view. Turning to the left, the roof of the Church Cottage can be seen. Turning to the right, the storage garage can be seen.

Now walk about 250m from the church (choose a suitable direction) and look back to it. How visible is it? What else do you notice?

The church is partially hidden from the main road by a hedge (which has in recent years been reduced in height to increase visibility). The church is set back from the main road about 100m. When people travel the main road, they would notice the church cottage and the church hall (which adjoin the road), but may fail to notice the church itself. However, there is a large roadside sign announcing the presence of the church.

What public buildings, if any, (health centres, schools etc.) are within 250m of the church building (draw a circle on a map)? What is the Church's relationship with them?

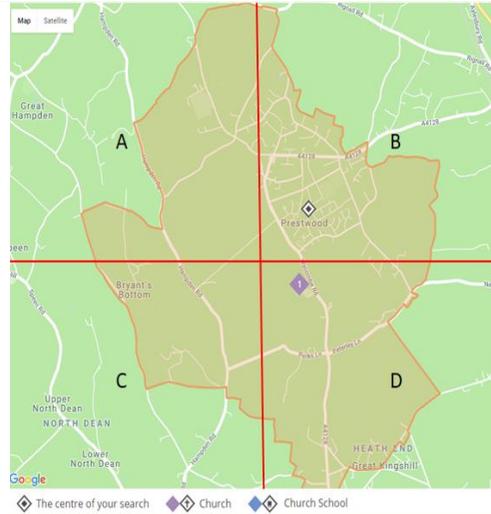
The only public buildings within a 250m radius of the church are the church cottage and the church hall (owned by the church).

Find one or two people (a pair?) to spend a spare weekday morning or whole day at the church site from before schools are open. Count the number of people who pass by on foot over a set time. Do people stop to chat with each other or even meet together near the church? Draw the paths people take as they pass by on a map of the surrounding area of the building and record what you notice below:

Although the church is away from the main village centre, a surprising number of people do pass by, to get to the bus stop, Hildreths (garden centre), the Polecat (pub), and also to visit the graveyard.

What proportion of the worshipping community travel in from outside the Parish boundary to worship, how many live within the boundaries and are they spread evenly or clumped in a certain part of the parish. This might help surface how the congregation reflects its community, and what other distinctions (e.g. class or insider/outsider) may exist. Parish boundaries and maps can be found at: <http://www.achurchnearyou.com/parishmap.php> An example of the kind of survey which members could be asked to complete is included in this section. Record below what you notice:

Approximately 70% of the congregation comes from within the parish boundary, with 30% travelling from the neighbouring areas. Looking at the map, the bulk of the population of Prestwoods resides in Quadrant B, which is basically the centre of the village. Quadrants A and C are still fairly rural, with Quadrant D having ribbon development along the roads. The church is situated in Quadrant D



What schools, both Primary and Secondary, serve the children and young people in the Parish/es and what is the relationship of the local church to them – perhaps use a scale of close to distant or hot to cold and explain why:

Prestwood Infant and Prestwood Junior School are both community schools within the village in quadrant B. The Rector has close links with both. He was a governor at the infant school for 8 years, 1 of which he served as chair of governors, with another member of the congregation on the governing body of the Junior School. Since the two schools became a Federation the number of governors has reduced due to there being only the one governing body, the Rector stood down but the congregational member remains very involved in the new governing body. The Rector takes assemblies every other week at the Infant school and tries to do the same at the Junior school. He visits the Junior school to contribute to lessons in both Years 5 and 6, and recently Year 3 visited the church. Prestwood Lodge, in quadrant B on the edge of a large housing estate is a specialist school for secondary aged pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (the boys do not respond particularly well to strangers / changes in their routine). The local secondary school is the Misbourne in Great Missenden in the parish of St. Peter & St. Paul. Although the church also serves Great Kingshill, the combined school there is outside the parish boundary and comes under Hughenden Valley with links to St Michael's and All Angels. Pipers, a private girls school, is on the very edge of the parish boundary at the very bottom edge of quadrant D in Great Kingshill and has its own chaplain. There are currently no links with any of these schools.

Three questions for your Steering Team to discuss, in light of the above:

How does the congregation's use of space fit with the church's vision and mission?

To what extent does the building/s enable mission and in what ways is it a barrier?

What does how the church building is perceived say to the local community about God?

We have an eclectic mix of usage of the church buildings, not just religious, which fits well with our mission & vision

Reordering has helped the use of the buildings for mission. The space is very versatile, and can be arranged in many different formats, although anecdotally the "cinema style" layout is not liked.

4. Numerical Growth and Decline

Download your Statistics for Mission returns from here <http://www.leicester.anglican.org/statistics-for-mission/> (in Leicester) or by contacting your diocesan office in other dioceses. This information hopefully saves going through registers but this might be helpful to briefly do so as to supplement what is provided. Use the following questions to reflect on what the Spirit might be saying to you:

Going back as far back as is practically possible, describe trends in the size of the worshipping community: (i.e. how big are the congregations and how has that changed). As well as looking at the last decade, or so, it might also be helpful to delve into registers from some decades ago to get a snapshot as to the size of the worshipping community then (and test any assumptions, such as the building was full in the 19th century or there was a certain 'golden age'!)

Back in the 1990s there were 4 services on a Sunday, an 8am said holy communion, a 9:30 communion, an 11:15 family service (non communion to appeal to a broader demographic) and a 6pm evensong or sung eucharist. The church was trying to have something for everyone. More latterly, these services have distilled to the 8am said communion and the 9:30 communion. A snapshot from 1851 suggests that there was a morning and afternoon service, and that the combined attendance at the two was 291 (census of religious worship, 1851)

Compare the Sunday attendance with weekday attendance and the overall size of the worshipping community and those joining and leaving it. What do you notice?

The Sunday attendance averages at about 80 at the main service, with the 8am said holy communion attracting about 4-8 people. There is a communion service on a Tuesday and Wednesday, attracting about 20 people between them. There is also a very informal Toddler service on a Thursday, attracting about 8. The numbers of joiners and leavers are reasonably similar.

What are the main other Christian denominations active in your area? Some may be larger "eclectic" churches that gather people from afar – including your area.

As well as Holy Trinity, there is the Prestwood Methodist Church and the King's Church

What do you know of the wider attendance trends in local churches, Deanery and Diocese (again Stats for Mission might offer some help here, plus anecdotal awareness and other sources):

All the local churches seem to be having a falling attendance, including the King's Church, the Methodist Church, and the neighbouring parish of St Peter & St Paul at Great Missenden.

What are the long term attendance trends within your Diocese and Denomination (over the past hundred years):

The long term trend seems to be a growing of the population but a reduction in attendance over the last 100 years.

What one aspect of your own membership/attendance encourages you most? What might God be up to in that?

Our numbers are fairly static, and we seem to be able to match the leavers with joiners

What one aspect of your own membership/attendance challenges you most? What might God be up to in that?

There is the ongoing issue of an ageing congregation, and probably in the leavers numbers there are deaths of longstanding members

Reflect on attendance and communicant numbers at Easter and Christmas compared with the normal week. What does that tell you about the wider community:

There are definitely a big influx of worshippers at Easter and particularly Christmas. This can be family members who live away coming home, or people who wouldn't usually attend church. Some members of the congregation themselves are away at Christmas, so the fact that we see an increase in numbers despite this is encouraging. There is still a nostalgia around singing carols at Christmas.

Reflect on the number of weddings, funerals, baptisms and thanksgivings. What do you notice? How 'sticky' are these contacts? - i.e. what proportion of them stay worshipping with you? What might be the reasons for them staying or not? What could you do to encourage more 'stickiness'?

Most years there are more baptisms than funerals, which is interesting. The number of weddings has been in a fairly steady decline. We used to have a "Friends of Holy Trinity" organisation, and we would give out leaflets to wedding couples and baptism attendees. It didn't result in many new members, but it was an effort to engage people with the church. Since then, efforts are made to send cards to wedding couples on their first anniversary and memorial cards on the first anniversary of a funeral. In January each year there is a service of thanksgiving to which all the babies / families of those baptised in the last 12 months are invited. Take-up has not been great.

Have any churches closed in your benefice/parish in the last twenty years? If so how many, which denominations and why did they close?

The Zion Strict Baptist church in Kiln Lane, Prestwood has closed in the last 20 years, thought to be due to a dwindling attendance. It is believed the building is now being used by the local undertaker as a Chapel of Rest.

What else do you notice which doesn't fit in any box above which it is important not to forget:

Three questions for your Steering Team to discuss, in light of the above:

What biblical images come to mind or relate to the congregation's understanding of numerical growth and numerical decline?

Can you account for rises and falls in the membership and worship attendance patterns? What might God have been doing at those times?

In congregations that baptize children, what if any is the expectation of baptizing adults?

The church is very happy and willing to baptise adults

5. Finance and leadership

Refer to your annual financial returns to the Diocese (or if not to hand they should be available from your diocesan finance team). Alternatively find copies of the Church Council annual accounts. Use the following questions to reflect on what the Spirit might be saying to you:

Going back as far back as is practically possible, describe the main trends recorded in the accounts, including noticing what money has been (and hasn't been) spent on. You also need to include any reserves the church keeps and the policy around their usage or otherwise.

In 1990 our income was £42,000 of which 90% came from Giving.

By 2017 our income was £137,000 of which 70% came from Giving. By 2017 7% of our income came from letting our premises and 6% came from weddings/baptisms/funerals, substantially increasing our income.

In 1990 our expenditure was £40,000. Parish Share was 45% of expenditure, maintenance/repairs 22% and as a matter of policy we gave away 10% of our total income as Mission Giving.

We hold £30,000 of reserves in the Repair Fund. This is sufficient to cover a substantial repair without having to have a special appeal before we can commit to the repair.

We also hold £89,000 of reserves in the Legacy Fund. The PCC are committed to meeting our day-to-day running costs out of income and using the Legacy Fund to enable us to invest in resources which will generate future growth. Over the last 2 years we have funded a Marketing Officer, to be more professional in letting our buildings, and the on-going cost of this is now matched by increased lettings income. We have just agreed to replace our Childrens Worker (at a cost of £4,000 per year) with a Family Support Worker (at a cost of £15,000 per year), initially funded from the Legacy Fund. We believe this meets our most pressing current need and offers the best scope for further growth.

By 2017 our expenditure was £137,000. Parish share represented 48% and maintenance/repairs 7%. We gradually reduced our Mission Giving out of General Fund and replaced it with specific cause appeals. In 2017 these raised an additional £4,000 (equivalent to 3% of our income). By 2017 we spent £10,000 on an Office Administrator and £4,000 on a Childrens Worker.

What one thing encourages you most? What might God be up to in that?

Encouraged by the fact that we seem to be able to meet our financial obligations, despite the fact that the expenses keep rising. God telling us to have faith.

What one thing challenges you most? What might God be up to in that?

The aging congregation will sadly dwindle over time, and we need to be more financially sustainable over the long term.

Turning to leadership, perhaps with the help of a board in your church building denoting how long incumbents have been in post for, describe what you notice (for example, people staying long or short, maybe a pattern of people retiring from this post, or even leaving stressed or dying in role):

Since its founding in 1849 there have been 16 incumbents at Prestwood, with their years in post ranging from 2 years to 26 years. The average length of service is 10.5 years. Two of the last 5 incumbents retired, two moved on, and our present Rector has been in position for 10 years

Describe the 'model' of leadership and/or how things get decided and done in this congregation? Some examples at the extremes might be 'Father knows best' to 'we all muck in and no one person's voice is valued above any other.' What is the relationship between ordained and lay leadership, how does communication flow amongst the leaders? How effective is the leadership at all levels within this congregation - what works well and what doesn't? What does all this tell you about how you think God is at work amongst you?

The Rector usually first raises ideas at the biweekly staff meetings. From here, significant decisions are made after discussion at the PCC. The Rector has fairly strong views and brings his influence to bear. In the face of strong opposition, he will change his mind. Example of this was the re-ordering project, where an ambitious plan to "turn the church round" (move the altar to the opposite end of the building) was met with strong opposition.

What else do you notice about finance and leadership which doesn't fit in any box above which it is important not to forget:

Three questions for your Steering Team to discuss, in light of the above:

What do you notice about tenures of leadership in your congregation in relationship to membership and attendance patterns? Is there any relationship or repeating patterns?

How does your budget and giving affect the congregation's perception of participating in God's mission locally and globally?

What is the culture of giving and stewardship in this congregation? What biblical or other images guide the congregation's understanding of giving? Do you run regular stewardship campaigns? Do they make a difference?

In the past there have been some charismatic clergy, which does influence attendance.

Mission giving does not seem to meet expectations - anecdotally people think it should be more.

There have been stewardship campaigns. The Diocese has a new scheme which the church is considering