

Diocesan Synod, Saturday 21st March 2015

Stimulating Growth: Responding to the Needs of the Local Community

This document will provide your group with some contextual information around responding to the needs of the local community, and will outline briefly some ideas and comments linked to this theme that have been put forward during initial consultation. This document should be considered a **stimulus for discussion**. You may wish to explore and develop aspects of the ideas presented, or you may come up with different ideas: all of this is helpful as we seek to discern how our resources can be used most effectively to stimulate Church growth.

Impetus

In order to serve the people of Devon with joy in ways that will lead to maximum impact and growth, we need to connect with them and find out what their needs are. The Plymouth Fairness Commission has provided us with a good deal of information on the issues impacting upon communities in Plymouth, and we now have an opportunity to serve the people of Plymouth by responding to the Commission's findings. We also need to consider how we can gain similar insight into other communities in our Diocese.

Context

The Plymouth Fairness Commission found, through talking to local people, that there are important inequalities in all areas of public resource provision, education, housing, employment, opportunity, life expectancy and many other aspects of people's lives. The support and actions of public sector, private sector and voluntary agencies will be critical to making a change in those lives. National Government's response has so far been disappointing. We had had presentations at Bishops Diocesan Council and at Synod which explained both the purpose of the Commission and its key findings. Plymouth holds a significant proportion of the population of the Diocese and has considerable inequality and deprivation, which is a real concern for the Church of a loving, generous and inclusive God.

Possible initiatives

1. To resource the development of the Church's response to the Plymouth Fairness Commission, through identifying, costing and launching specific projects which address the Commission's findings, have missional potential and will serve the people of Plymouth. <http://www.plymouthfairnesscommission.co.uk>
2. To set up a project inspired by the Who Cares? Campaign that has been successful in Norfolk and Suffolk. The Campaign was started when a Norfolk church carried out a small survey asking local people the single question "What hurts the most?", and was overwhelmed by the level of response received. The issues raised in the survey were addressed in a series of talks and then compiled into a book, and the demand for this led to nearly 60 churches across Norfolk and Suffolk taking up the project. The project has allowed local churches to learn what is relevant to local people, has provided opportunities to share the hope of the Gospel, and has initiated practical responses in local communities. <http://www.who-cares.org.uk/>

Growing in prayer
Making new disciples
Serving the people of Devon with joy



Comments

- Responding to the PFC is obviously important and requires resources.
- This is a key area of work, but the PFC's central aim of increasing connectivity in Plymouth will be addressed in part through the provision of sustainable ministry and Church schools in new housing areas, through engagement with local schools/academies and through work related to the Occasional offices.