

Theological Reflection Work Stream

Theological Questions Raised in the Communications and Engagement Survey

As part of the diocesan-wide Communications and Engagement Survey (conducted by Power Marketing in July 2020) the following question was posed: “Thinking about the last few months of the COVID-19 Lock down - what is the biggest question it's raised for you about God, faith and the world?” 383 of the 561 respondents to the survey answered this question and these responses are explored in this report.

The purpose of the question was to generate a series of further questions which would form the basis of a diocesan-wide theological reflection exercise in the autumn of 2020. The survey responses have been grouped into themes, each with an indicative question: Theodicy, Revelation, Reflection, Vision and Faith. These five themes are explored below with the survey responses included in full. Responses have not been edited other than to remove typing errors and some may appear in more than one category.

Theodicy

Where is God in this?

In the aftermath of a global pandemic, it is no surprise that people are asking questions about God and suffering. This is exemplified by the comment submitted by one respondent, “We are told that God will listen to us – that he loves us – but I do not see how he is answering my prayers”. For many people the question is not even fully formed, but is simply directed towards God in the form: “Why?”

For some, this question presents a significant barrier to faith (“I know the enormous loss of life has made some people query their faith in God”), for others the thought of a world out of God’s control leads to fear and anxiety for the future (“It has also made me think how fragile life is when it can just be taken away in the blink of an eye with a virus that can just take hold and spread around the world”).

Revelation

What is God saying to us?

The impetus not to question God, but to learn from him was also evident in the survey responses. One person asked, “How will we move forward and have we learnt the lessons of our relationship to our planet and to each other?” Someone else wrote, “Have we all been sent to our rooms to think about what we're doing, and how we can do it better?”

Respondents also suggested what the lessons were that God was wanting to teach the world and the church. Many of these were focussed on human misuse of creation (“are we humans exhausting the world's resources?”) and our need to be more globally aware (“we are all part of one global family and all responsible for and to each other”). Others took a more local view suggesting God is calling us to be more involved in our local communities (“how as a Christian community we can best support each other and those living locally”).

Reflection

What have we learnt about ourselves?

The disruption of everyone's lives has led people to make discoveries about themselves and their neighbours, with national news reporting both the power and resilience of the human spirit and also some the darker aspects of human nature ("It seems to have brought the best out in people although there have been some selfish actions").

The change in perspective caused by a break in routine has also caused a number of people to reevaluate their personal priorities, both in how they relate to church and to the community, ("Life is short and precarious, am I making best use of it?")

Vision

What sort of church do we need to be?

This call to reflection and change also extended beyond the personal sphere and towards the church. There was a recognition that we can't go back to how things were before COVID-19 so we need to "embrace the opportunities that the closure of churches has thrown up and engage with the challenge posed to our 'default' way of doing church?"

There was an optimism around new opportunities for missional engagement, albeit with some caution about the technology that could enable us to reach new people. ("It has been a wonderful opportunity to take stock, reflect on what God is saying and draw closer to Him. A refreshing change from church as we have known it and a desire to get out of the church doors and into the community", "We have had to reimagine 'going to church' online. Whilst there should always be in-church worship, streaming services allow access for shift workers, and the housebound and would encourage more to contribute to church life").

The temporary closure of Church buildings (although strongly criticised by some respondents) also raised the question, "Do we really need church buildings – beautiful though they are?", especially as some "may not be fit for purpose" and where the "burden of maintaining buildings and admin is huge".

As people reflected on the type of church we could be, they also asked what sort of leadership is required at both a local and national level. Some respondents were critical of the public profile of church leaders during the pandemic offering comments like, "somehow we should have used this as an opportunity to engage with the wider public by giving clear leadership and hope in a dark time".

Faith

What do we need to hold on to?

As well as the questions which were submitted through the survey, people also wanted to hold on to particular truths and tenets of the Christian Faith. Central to these was the assertion that God is in control of this world and is able to bring good out of a terrible situation, ("I am sure He has a bigger plan. Better things ahead for us to pray and trust in") and that God loves us and is with us through suffering, ("faith has been tested but assured of God's continuing love for his people").

A small number of participants emphasised the biblical concept of “living in end times” and calibrated their theodicy and faith in the framework of this eschatology. Prayer was also mentioned as an important foundation of faith (“anybody can pray at home”) and some were able to make a distinction between the habits of religion and a living faith (“God and my faith journey are bigger than the church building. I have become more creative in my relationship with God”).

Next Steps

These themes and their associated questions need to be considered alongside the responses to the *Listening in Deaneries* exercise, which took place through Deanery Chapters in May 2020. Together, these two documents represent the theological reflections of both clergy and lay people across the diocese at the point where lockdown was still in force.

These questions are the start of an ongoing dialogue between members of the Church of England in Devon, the purpose of which is to understand God, ourselves and our world a little better in theological terms.

My suggestion would be that these five subjects could be developed into five topics for use in discussion groups, with some creative theological input from the work stream group and further discussion questions. The value of these groups would be in the conversations themselves, but they could also be captured in some way so that groups could see how their own thoughts contributed to a larger body of ‘ordinary theology’ across the diocese.

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Responses from the Survey

Theodicy

Indicative Question: Where is God in this?

- Ability to manage without it.
- Always wondering WHY we have this awful virus and continuing to pray it soon goes away
- A question I often ask (not just about the COVID panic)... where is God in all this..."
- Does he think we are all getting too old?
- Has God let this happen to teach us something (about environmental issues,, materialism. Or what???)
- Having answers to those who question the validity of faith.
- Helping others grasp the problems of understanding suffering in God's world
- Hmmm, Just why it has happened. Why are some people get so poorly, Why does situations like this bring out the negativity
- How can a disease like this occur
- How can God let this crisis happen? Is it part of his plan?
- How can't something like this be allowed to happen
- How did this happen?
- How do those without faith manage in difficult times?
- How long? (as in Psalm 90: "Relent, LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.) Psalm 90:16 May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendour to their children.
- How much longer will it be before God comes to restore and renew His world? Such suffering!
- How other people view evolution of viruses etc.
- I do sometimes question the suffering happening at the moment and pray for God's mercy on us all.
- I know the enormous loss of life have made some people query their faith in God
- I wish that God would intervene in our world as it is in such an awful state. I keep praying about all of the global misery and asking the Lord for help, but things just seem to get worse and the pandemic just seems to be like the straw that will break the camel's back.
- If God sent this, why did he do so?
- Innocent people died especially NHS and care home people. Cruel and unfair
- Is anyone holding the steering wheel?
- Is God still there?
- Is he still working in our lives? Praying for him to be close.
- It has caused people think about major life questions
- Life in lockdown isn't life but COVID-19 also takes away life. What's the real meaning of life?
- Nevertheless the question has to be related to COVID 19 effects on folk with the devastation caused to people's lives particularly in countries unable or without the facilities to cope.
- Not really thought about it, generally worried, but not questioned God in all this
- Overcoming doubts about age and loneliness
- So more suffering, I still struggle with that.
- to actively listen and hopefully give hope to those who are asking questions about what's its all about

- True Faith is much less complicated than it is often presented
- We are told that God will listen to us, that he loves us, but I do not see how he is answering my prayers. I keep on praying for a miracle to happen, that God will find a way of infiltrating people's brains and changing their cruel and destructive behaviour. I do always thank God for the blessings that I have in being able to live well in a lovely part of the world, but I want us all to share our resources and for everyone to be able to have shelter, food, water, clothes and most of all to be able to live in peace.
- What are His reasons for allowing COVID to happen at this time?
- What has the human race done to be put into this awful situation will it make us kinder to everybody around us?
- What is God saying in these days and how best can I answer those who ask me.
- What is God wanting to teach us?
- When will it end
- Where has the Spirit gone? This is something I find hard to sustain by myself
- Where is God at work in this and how can we help him?
- Where is God in all this?
- Where is God in this?
- Where is God?
- Where is the truth?
- Why
- Why
- Why all this pain.
- Why does it take a catastrophe like this to make people ask and seek answers to the important things in life?
- Why has this happened
- Why the innocent are taken while COVID it's never seem to suffer.
- Why?
- Why?
- Why?
- Why?
- Why? Let this happen, let people suffer and struggle, what do we need to do
- WHY????

Theodicy: Worry for the Future

- How to explain it to my children and keep them from losing faith. Worry for my elderly parents who have underlying health problems and fear of not being able to be with them if they become sick or die.
- I don't think I would have coped as well without God and the clergy by my side. I am personally worried about the world I will depart and leave my children and grandchildren coping with what is unwritten as yet.
- It has also made me think how fragile life is when it can just be taken away in the blink of an eye with a virus that can just take hold and spread around the world like COVID-19.
- To not be fearful and to use common sense.
- What will the world look like in 12 months' time?

- How much longer will it be before God comes to restore and renew His world? Such suffering!

Revelation

Indicative Question: What is God saying to us?

- Have we all been sent to our rooms to think about what we're doing, and how we can do it better?
- How does this fit in with God's plan for me and others?
- I am amazed that man is so afraid of others that that he must develop an organism powerful enough to kill not only others but their own as well. Then be stupid enough not to keep it secure. Is this a punishment from God!
- I hoped it was a message from God to the world to slow down, stop worshiping money, see what is really important in one's life, but I think I will be disappointed as the world is so intent on economic growth, it has lost sight of people. Economic growth is like the seed that fell on rock.
- Is God trying to tell us something?
- It's interesting that I've heard no-one, not even among the clergy, suggesting it could be some sort of alert or message from God about the way we are living. CS Lewis wrote about God shouting to us in our pain. Has no-one made such a comment?
- We are not in charge of our world; we need to be aware of the way we have been abusing creation
- We must change many of the things we do and listen once again to God's voice.
- What does God want us to let go of in order to see the Kingdom grow
- What God is trying to teach and show us? How to move forward into the 21st century.
- What is God saying to us?
- What is God wanting to teach us?
- What lessons are to be learned?
- Where are we in our personal walk with God? Where are headed. Is this a wake-up call for the church?

Revelation: Misuse of Creation

- Are we humans exhausting the world's resources?
- Confusion about individual/societal/ global responsibility for its source
- Has God and faith helped Christians to cope better with the lockdown? Will everyone care more for the world around us in the long term?
- How are we going to look after God's wonderful world better and share the wealth of the few with the many?
- How to live in harmony with the world (each other) and especially the natural environment especially since the 'anthropause' that resulted from the lockdown. And why BAME have been the hardest hit by Covid-19...
- How to sustain fellowship in lock down. Hope that it will make people celebrate, appreciate and care more for the whole world and the environment.
- How urgent it is to realign our priorities to get our relationship with God and all of his creation back in balance and at the centre of our concern. How very closely we are linked to

and dependent upon each other, and how very little time we may have to get this right.
What is God asking of me at this time?

- How will we move forward and have we that is everyone learnt the lessons of our relationship to our planet and to each other.
- I feel that God has given the world a wakeup call and it is up to all Christians to try and make a difference, by talking to people about making a greener world. My weekly on line services have strengthened my faith and brought my husband to join me. He may not be ready for a church service, but is happy to join in on YouTube, as may some others
- Is God behind it? Making an adjustment he needs to make to the world population balance? Giving, also, a chance for the natural world, via reduced pollution, and reduced global warming, to prevent sea levels rising etcetera. I felt initially estranged from God.
- It has raised the question of how much the world has messed up and misused the things God has given to us.
- Not a question, a belief that the protection of the planet's natural resources is vital and should never be exploited by humanities' greed
- Our failure to care for our neighbour and for creation
- Stop yearning for something new and respect the environment. Slow down progress.
- That we must not go back to how we were before, but learn the lessons, for instance from the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and move forward focusing less on material things and more on the needs of the world and its people.
- That we must pay attention to safeguarding creation.
- We are not in charge of our world; we need to be aware of the way we have been abusing creation
- Why we can't respect God's creation(inequality, racism, pollution)

Revelation: A Call to Repentance

- It hasn't really raised a question in respect of God. I certainly don't see the pandemic as something inflicted on us by God. We have been responsible for this happening. and we need to turn to God to say sorry for our misuse of creation, of one another
- It is a reminder that as a nation we need to repent and turn back to God?
- When will our nation return to God?
- Why hasn't humankind listened to, and positively reacted to, the gospel!?

Reflection

Indicative Question: What have we learnt about ourselves?

Reflection: Community Spirit

- ...and who is my neighbour?
- Brought home how interconnected all the countries are.
- Can we, the church, be part of a globally better 'new normal', bearing in mind that would mean giving up some of our power, wealth and white patriarchal privilege?
- Church and community.
- First two impossible to answer - third that there are fantastic human beings around but they don't seem to be in our government at the moment.

- From my experience this pandemic has brought people and communities closer together and I have witnessed non-Christian friends praying for the first time ever. Out of all the dreadfulness and fear, this has to be a positive!
- God moves fast to inspire good neighbourliness and innovation, why can't the church to the same?
- How as a Christian community we can best support each other and those living locally
- How can I serve the community I live in
- How can we do more to support those in our own localities
- How can we help?
- How can we show that God is present in the actions of so many helping and caring - believer and non-believer alike
- How communities can work together regardless of their background
- How do we re-set our countries values away from 'Me, Me, Me' towards valuing the good of the community as a whole
- How small the world is and how interwoven we all are. How welcome it was that there was so much less traffic, noise and pollution.
- How to care for others
- how to feel less alone
- How we love one another and work together to serve one another and the world around
- I have seen a lot of kindness and friendliness evolve amongst my community.
- It has also shown me what is important in life such as having good friends and family around to support you especially when you live on your own.
- It has reinforced the fact that we are all part of one global family and all responsible for and to each other
- It hasn't affected my faith. It has demonstrated that I know many people who live their faith through the generous way they live.
- MORE COMPASSION APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN GENERATED
- Natural disasters have always occur every so many years. A lot of good human behaviour and kindness been visible.
- Not a question but a realisation of how important regular contact with the Church family is
- Not a question but it has reaffirmed that we are relational beings and we struggle to live in isolation.
- Probably regarding the governance of nations of our world. But I don't think we can resolve that in a box this size...
- Re-affirmation of the kindness and goodness of most people, and the knowledge that God is always present in our lives.
- So many lost souls. Acts of kindness. The NHS needed PPE, Not saucepan banging peace not noise praying for and help.
- That we are all in a relationship with each other and God is with us all in the suffering, pain, death and our healing.
- The example of non-Christians who have loved their neighbours
- The importance of community and love for ones neighbour in every sense of the word "neighbour"
- The importance of relationships
- The overriding question for me (and possibly many others) is "what has the church really done to help the community in this crisis?" The answer borders on "very little apart from stay safe and stay alert".

- We all pulled together when the church was not open and as long as we have faith the future is in our hands.
- What has the human race done to be put into this awful situation will it make us kinder to everybody around us?
- Why can't the help for the community/homeless/looking out for our friends and neighbours be the norm rather than needing a lock down to kick start it?
- Why weren't faiths of all denominations working together more

Revelation: Human Nature and Behaviour

- Biggest one has been around mankind's need to rely on God. It's interesting that many people say they can't believe in someone they can't see etc. but they (apart from Mr Trump!) seem to now believe this almost invisible virus is real.
- But there are lots of questions that need answering about the world and sadly they are mostly due to politicians and corrupt governments and the extraordinary behaviour of individuals during this very frightening time.
- can human nature ever be changed this includes the church's outlook
- God does his work but we humans do not live by the rules
- How do I respond to close friends of mine who are leaders of a different church denomination and who have blatantly broken lockdown guidelines. I know we all make mistakes but as church leaders they should be setting an example and this challenges my Christian response to them and trust in them.
- How to survive
- How we convince people that 'common sense', or a lack, of it starts with people caring, or NOT caring, about neighbours and friends! Can we find God within the selfishness of humanity!
- I find it hard to comprehend man's inhumanity to man and beast alike. I feel so distressed when I see the trashing of the planet that seems impossible to stop.
- Inequality
- Inequality.
- Is GOD despairing? Is there sufficient FAITH to save us from ourselves? Will the WORLD survive our foolishness and terrible greed?
- Is this a God given opportunity to re-organise our insane, work driven, greed driven, unfair society to something that suits our needs rather than the needs of corporate organisations? Or is it a man-made virus (as the internet is saying) planted by the New World Order/Deep State as an economic hit and for planned population reduction, especially via the coming coronavirus vaccine? My own view is that even were the latter to be true I have faith, through the Calls that are going out all over the world right now to change our world to a fairer place where people have the time and freedom to develop their spiritual bodies and their faith, that LOVE TRUTH and WISDOM will prevail and the evil Satanists (Deep State) will be defeated. How can you support the churches in your diocese if you keep your head stuck in the sand? Look at what is going on really in the world and do not trust the media which is owned and run by the Satanists.
- It amazes me that there are so many people that will put their lives on the line and then again you get people who are so selfish it beggars belief. God made us all different!!
- It has demonstrated the worst and best about our politicians and various of our leaders who are sometimes wonderful and sometimes the exact opposite.

- It seems to have brought the best out in people although there have been some selfish actions.
- Quite a worrying place at the moment. People need to be sensible and respect others to avoid another spike.
- Selfishness of some
- We are all more vulnerable than we realize. The world is divided - and more noticeable since COVID-19. We need God.
- Where did everyone go?!
- Where do we go from here as a divided society - even divided churches? How can we follow God together when we cannot agree on minor points such as face masks?
- Why are the acts of some people so unchristian?
- Why do American Christians still support Trump!
- Why do some people not follow the guidelines? Do we need Church buildings for worship?
- Why does the media seem to be so determined to blame someone?
- Why in the UK in 2020 do we still need foodbanks?
- Why people still after all that is happening a minority of them are still selfish
- Why so much inequality exists
- Why the innocent are taken while COVID it's never seem to suffer.
- Why, when so many have done so much good during this strange time have others behaved so badly - breaking lock down and not being held accountable, domestic violence and now fly tipping.

Revelation: Personal Priorities

- A reconsideration about what is important. and what one might alter...only a beginning of this thought process
- How can I communicate with people when I am isolated because I am shielding
- How committed am I to my role as a Churchwarden? I have actually enjoyed not having to worry about the church building or how many people are likely to appear on a Sunday.
- How do we make more space for God in our increasingly uncertain lives?
- It has been a wonderful opportunity to take stock, reflect on what God is saying and draw closer to Him. A refreshing change from church as we have known it and a desire to get out of the church doors and into the community. The people of God are the Church, not the building or the services however good they are.
- It has given me time to communicate with God more frequently than ever before. I have re-evaluated personal priorities and questioned the relentless busy-ness of life before lockdown. I want everything we now do to be joyful, compassionate, and careful of world resources and the needs of others. I
- Life is short and precarious, am I making best use of it?
- Over- busy-ness.
- That we should stop and take stock of what we have.
- The need to be positive in my outlook. The need to think of others. The need to pray.
- To be less busy! To treasure and give thanks for each new day! To stay in contact with family and friends (often by phone or letters) We must challenge our politicians to be truthful and to change the way we all live, so that we have a just, compassionate, inclusive society! To live very simply...and to pray all the time wherever I am! Gardening has been the greatest joy...Thank you for all your hard work in the Diocese! X

- What and how, does God want us as a church and me personally to do now?
- What are my idols? Why don't I have more compassion? How can I live my life to serve the poor and marginalised?
- What are my priorities?
- what can I do to fulfil God's plan and help my community and the world and make best use of my gifts and my time before I die
- What is important to me about attending a church?
- What is my purpose now that my usual ministry has stopped?

Vision

Indicative Question: What sort of church do we need to be?

Vision: Change and Reflection

- God - Incarnation & Suffering make sense - Sovereignty & Power do not. Faith = faithfulness = perseverance. Most people still want their Vicar & local church, even online, and not a mega-church franchise like HTB. World - global mess but beauty & love in detail. Church - why is ABC liturgically & theologically inept?
- Having had more time for contemplation and reflection during lockdown I have realised that current ways of working are unsustainable for clergy and PCCs. Everything has become very labour intensive and my feeling is that too much time is spent serving the church as an institution and preserving the building rather than serving God and each other. Lockdown has given me more time to just be.
- How are we going to do this together well?
- How are we going to use the experience of this to allow change that can bring benefit to others and creation
- How as a church will we develop after it's all over, in what direction will the church be heading?
- How best the church can serve in such a time
- How can Christians serve God's purposes more effectively in this broken world
- How can the Anglican Church totally revamp its structure, buildings and finance for our modern society that makes it more accessible and sustainable in every sense
- how can the church continue to act as 'church' when we get back into 'the building'
- How can we do things differently after lockdown? How can we do church differently.
- How can we embrace the opportunities that the closure of churches has thrown up and engage with the challenge posed to our 'default' way of doing church?
- How can we make sure we don't rush 'back to normal' after the pandemic.
- How churches are going to survive in their present state
- How relevant is church in its present form?
- How to restore confidence and re focus
- How we exit the lockdown without just returning to what was before in Church; how can we mix and match face to face church with continuing producing online content?
- I feel this period of isolating has given an opportunity for reflection, so I think it has been therapeutic
- I'm not sure it's quite what you're asking, but the big question for me is how many churches will not survive as effective entities. I believe as well, but I suspect that many smaller churches will be in trouble.

- In normal times C of E seems spend too much time looking inward, maintaining old buildings (which may not be fit for purpose), and not enough time looking outward on mission.
- It has been a wonderful opportunity to take stock, reflect on what God is saying and draw closer to Him. A refreshing change from church as we have known it and a desire to get out of the church doors and into the community. The people of God are the Church, not the building or the services however good they are.
- It has exposed the fact that issues of social justice have not been adequately addressed. That the Church of England has been marginalised
- It's changed the way that church has had to be experienced - it's not necessarily challenged our faith. As a season, it's provided more time for rest and reflection, and also the experience of being isolated (which is the norm for many), but now we're entering a tricky phase of slowly getting back to meeting together safely. What will church look like in the future? Will there be more of a focus on smaller groups? Will we have a better understanding of the needs of the isolated (and a better way of connecting with them?).
- Maintaining faith without community
- No questions about God and faith, however questions about the things the world put more value on eg celebrities
- Place of the church in local communities - how it can be helpful. What the church has to say about the issues it has exposed - extreme inequalities in education, health etc. The biggest question though in this period has arguably been around racism and how the church can be actively anti-racist.
- Please don't go back to how it was before.
- Post-pandemic, how can we engage those whose awareness of the need for prayer/God has been awakened during the pandemic?
- The future of parish ministry
- The nature of church worship
- To be more like the early church, salt and light, not lukewarm but try to be on fire for God, it's what the world needs to hear and to look after the beautiful world he has given us.
- To reflect on complacency of traditions
- Unless the church is a force for good in a time like this, how can we claim to be God's people?
- we have to acknowledge that something is at work in the world, and we have to discern what that might be, and what it might mean for us and for the church
- What am I supposed to do, because it brought my musical ministry to an end (taken from me) How to restart and what the vision should be
- What IS Church??!
- what is our role as the church and are we fulfilling it
- When normal patterns are stripped away and we see more clearly what's really important, what do we see, and what has stood the test in church life?
- When will people realize that the world after lock down cannot be the same as before?
- Where do we go from here?
- Where does God want us to go from this? In this time of transformation, how can the church move forward?
- Where is the Spirit leading us? What will the new church landscape look like in this place?
- Which parts of church routine are actually essential to worship God? How can we encourage people to engage with God more actively?
- Who we are as the church and how we operate

- Why bother with going to Church at all.
- Will the good things/ideas/attitudes that have accrued continue when something approaching normality returns?
- Will we all just go back to our old ways once it is over, I so hope not.

Vision: New Opportunities

- Amazed about how people turn to God in a crisis even if only watching on line services when they would not attend church services.
- Being present in evangelism and loving service to our communities when usual channels of presence, like the church buildings, have been closed.
- Communication
- Discovering that the church in the market place is where people are comfortable - ie in their homes. Knowing neighbours. Knowing neighbours means we can cry with them, serve them in whatever way they need and they know and feel our pains and anxieties and we can receive from them. This is community. Like Jesus sending out the 12 and the 72 empty handed - they had to receive too. This is evangelism made so simple and joyful!
- How are we to get the Gospel of Jesus out to all?
- How can I communicate my faith more relevantly and meaningfully as people begin to "re-imagine" the future
- how can I engage more with those who have no faith and what am I doing about my personal ministry
- How can the church help people to continue to embrace the things that are important - God in prayer at home, family/friends, the environment, quality of life, a slower pace etc...?
- How can we actively reach out to our local community to share our faith?
- How can we adapt to this situation and reach our communities
- How can we continue to encourage all those people out there who have been connecting with God through online services?
- How can we help people in these circumstances to find the love of God in Jesus?
- How can we increase in line services for those less able to get into church
- How can we minister to our parishes at this time
- How can we reach more people and talk in practical terms what faith in Jesus means to real life today
- How can we reach out to non-church people
- How can we share the message of God's love with all the restrictions?
- How can we show the lost sheep That God does love them, is it really Christians gathering in church in middle class land??? Rather to be out sharing their pain with joy , kindness , love , peace , goodness , patience , gentleness , faithfulness , self-control , helping them in their struggles, to give them Hope In the Lord Jesus . Footsteps in the sand poem stuff 😊
- How do we bring hope to our broken society when so many appear fearful of engaging with faith & church
- How do we get Church attenders (on line or in pews) to be participants not consumers.
- How I can more effectively share the faith I have been gifted.
- How to communicate good news in this context
- How to engage the housebound
- how to impart to others
- How to keep all those who have watched on-line services but do not attend church

- How to make God known in a digital world and what impact does that have for those in a rural community?
- How to make God relevant to other people in the situation in which we find ourselves - not just COVID-19 related, but to do with any up-to-date and relevant issues
- How to provide for the 'scattered church' that has been growing through the telephone conference call services - those who can't or prefer not to attend the building
- How to reach the many "unchurched" who have found the Lock Down a time to reflect on what is important in life and spirituality.
- How to share our faith with others?
- How to translate an increase in engagement with online services to engagement with 'Church'
- How to we keep building momentum for our online presence as a church
- How we effectively engage with the community and those in need
- I think our church buildings and BCP have become idols and we need to be moving into much more mission focused ways of doing church. This is really difficult in small rural communities, but if we could access more resources, this may help us to move forward and engage the communities around us. The world is in need of God more than ever before and the local church needs to be speaking about Jesus everywhere, not just in church on Sundays.
- I very much like the way the virus has lead people to daily prayer, for those with the internet. Telephone calls also have reached out to those with no internet, or some at least. This is what church is about and for me the question is why was it not being done before? Why didn't the church find ways of connecting with people before? Why only in a building? Church is not a building it is people and we all should be out and about. We have our meeting place, but real church is not inside a building it is the people and if we don't reach out and connect and listen, well the 'church' will continue to shrink.
- Need to be innovative and bold
- Outreach and different ways of Mission
- Should al churches work hard at trying to set up on-line services as an option?
- So pleased that we have easy communication
- The church has lost its walls and we are being given an opportunity to share the gospel in new ways. Praying for God's awakening in the UK.
- The world needs saving
- To feel God's closeness and have a better understanding of who he is and how he relates to me in my daily life and to feel that He is constantly with me in everything I do if I allow myself the space to recognise it. Streamed services from our Parish priest have been a blessing and I enjoyed having time to reflect on the content in quietness without feeling rushed or distracted. I feel that moving forward it would be helpful to adopt a simpler approach where everything we do is rooted in prayer. To not spread ourselves too widely and to just do what we can manage well. To remember that whilst God is always with us, that we have a life outside "church".
- We are reaching more people online - how do we build this into 'normal time' with the pressures already on clergy?
- We have had to reimagine 'going to church' online. Whilst there should always be in church worship, streaming services allow access for shift workers, and the housebound and would encourage more to contribute to church life and the Common Fund.
- What are the new opportunities for engaging with people?

- what can I do to fulfil God's plan and help my community and the world and make best use of my gifts and my time before I die
- What is going on in our world and how can I equip myself and strengthen my faith and knowledge of God to do whatever it is that God would like me to do at this time and in the days to come?
- What should I be doing to bring glory to God? How can I share his love?
- Where is God at work in this and how can we help him?
- Will more people turn to Christ in this time of uncertainty?

Vision: New Opportunities: Technology

- How can we help those who feel cut off as they are too deaf to use a 'phone and have no computer?
- Danger of online services being as important or more important than the Eucharist
- Demonstrated that the Church is the people and you can attend several services from different churches more easily. Helped to deepen my faith. Realised how much effort goes into maintaining the church buildings.
- How to access inspirational teaching and fellowship with no Sunday gatherings, when I dislike social media and have found online services don't engage me in the same way as our regular worship.
- How to provide for the 'scattered church' that has been growing through the telephone conference call services - those who can't or prefer not to attend the building
- I wonder if we made God relevant enough to non-believers during this time. Social media provided much support locally-did the church do enough? Will on-line services attract more people-if so great but is there an agenda to close rural churches?
- Importance of spiritual support in home groups. Zoom meets it low key.
- It has made my rural church with no social media presence seem almost irrelevant....
- It's given me time for reflection about how worship can be accessed in times of isolation for people.
- Not being able to be in church and visually see other parishioners, telephone calls don't always help know how someone really is
- The Church of England needs to remember many Christians do not have access to technology but they need access to services and prayer with others .God is there for us when no one else is.
- We have had to reimagine 'going to church' online. Whilst there should always be in church worship, streaming services allow access for shift workers, and the housebound and would encourage more to contribute to church life and the Common Fund.
- What is actually going in among our congregation - there are things that we are not picking up via telephone / zoom services
- Why are many people keen to follow services on the TV and YouTube etc. but do not want to attend a church service

Vision: Buildings and Church Closures

- How can we help those who feel cut off as they are too deaf to use a 'phone and have no computer?
- Being dependent on one's own desire to pray and worship without others.

- Church being the people, not the buildings
- Church restrictions
- Churches closed
- Closure of the church buildings and the importance of social contact with other church members.
- Connectivity with our church congregation.
- Did the need to close our churches arise from a failure to understand that close to hand were resources for spreading the Gospel a fraction of the cost of maintaining the very same buildings?
- Do buildings REALLY matter.....?
- Do we need Church buildings for worship?
- Do we need our buildings? (BTW I think we do!)
- Do we need to battle against decaying, old, beautiful buildings? The flexibility of watching on line services is a big plus point
- Do we really need church buildings (beautiful though they are...)
- How can church function well without the buildings? (How can we see when God is doing something totally new ISA 43:18...)
- How can diocese support churches to be more active online whilst also returning to buildings? Burden of maintaining buildings and admin is huge.
- How can I find moments to be with God in my daily life at home, when I don't have a church building or services at a set time to attend?
- How can we keep our local church open for people who need it
- How important is the church building to the mission of the Church as community?
- how to build community, be the Body of Christ, when unable to meet
- How to keep engaged without much fellowship
- How we need to hold fast together in prayer. How hard for clergy who are not used to tech. How easily one can become used to not making the effort to attend services and pray in isolation at home
- I have a lot of questions about my faith. People this week are questioning the closing of churches. Teachers continued to go to work. Where was the church? Online?
- Should we be keeping all these really expensive buildings open? Could we not find other ways to meet together and share fellowship whilst praising God?
- The Church of England needs to remember many Christians do not have access to technology but they need access to services and prayer with others. God is there for us when no one else is.
- The importance of meeting together as Christians/Church to worship, pray, learn and encourage each other. Not necessarily every week but regularly
- The lack of faith displayed by the leaders closing the churches. It should have been up to the members of each congregation if they were afraid, as this is forecast to be still ongoing till August 2021. Also, why are the gyms opening, with the uncontrolled aerosol effect from hard exercise, while singing is banned?
- The role of the church / buildings
- The urgent need for church leadership
- There's more to church than a building. Is it necessary to have communion services on-line when only the priest is taking the bread and wine?
- Where was 'the church' when our suffering community needed us? Locked up buildings? Neighbours needing to find God in their trouble and no one to talk to? No hope for those

thousands not on line? No initiative to encourage church members to befriend the lonely and needy. Our community believed God had self-isolated or even shielded Himself and felt abandoned by 'the Church'. Our most vulnerable folk found more support from outside the church than from within it.

- Why are the small congregations of our churches responsible for and so concerned with the upkeep of huge buildings which are really an asset for the whole country
- Why did we have to close churches!!!!
- Why do we no longer have a concept of holy places? Why is the church building, which has for so many centuries been a focus of communal devotion, now seen as a huge liability rather than a huge asset? How can we recover the sense of community that we once enjoyed in physical gatherings, making music together and actually being with and listening to each other, in an age when it is almost too difficult to imagine sharing the common cup?

Vision: Missed Opportunities

- Can we rescue Joy 2020 in some shape or form in the near future?
- Denominational divisions are ridiculous
- God and faith is not joined up throughout the world
- How can churches stay separate when Jesus prayed that we would be one?
- Local churches need more practical/financial help from Diocese and Church of England. You seem distant and remote. We need our churches open. We need them repaired. We need more help from you to look after these buildings which are after all your property. Compared with other organisations you seem very slow to re-open. Churches are a place of communication through God. The need for them to be open has never been greater in my life time. My faith in God has increased during the COVID Crisis but my respect for the church as an organisation has decreased considerably. Please think about how you can support local churches / parishes this is your opportunity to get it right and make a difference.
- My faith in God remains the same. I do realise that all the online things may mean a lot more to younger people but not one of your questions has been aimed at the elderly, many of whom are the backbone of the church. Do you not want to know how you can help them?
- Thy Kingdom Come and praying for 5 people....yet not able to have any natural contact
- When will God get a mention instead of all about the "science" of the pandemic?
- Where is the prophetic voice of the Church... and why has the church and many of its ministers been so absent? There was really no good reason for closing church buildings. people have told me how much they missed the quiet sanctuary a church building can offer
- Where is the Church in the UK media? A missed opportunity to share Gods love.
- Why did the church turn inwards in a crisis that asked us to turn outwards?
- Why doesn't the diocese talk more about Jesus and the Bible?
- Why is the C of E so absent from debate and campaigning
- Why the church has become even more politically tainted and forgotten God. What happened to you?
- Why the national church has not caused the nation to prayer

Vision: Leadership

- How strong the local church is on its own, and how it survives without a diocesan structure.
- I have lost contact with the Church of England...the clergy are now left wing political commentators....no longer care about local parishionersnow feel further away from God as cannot connect or engage with them
- Institutional - the C of E hasn't covered itself in glory and one wonders what the legacy of that is going to be.
- Somehow we should have used this as an opportunity to engage with the wider public by giving clear leadership and hope in a dark time.
- That the Church of England is no longer interested in God, and faith. Totally focused on the world. That human beings generally are too frightened of death and the message of eternal life has not got through to most.
- What has the Church of England leadership done to help anyone except themselves? Be ashamed very ashamed. You have failed every person whether Christian or otherwise. I pray daily for Welby to go.
- Why has Church Leaders of all denominations been silent in the media?
- Why has the C of E at a national level been so silent? It is a concern that the C of E appears to be becoming more and more marginalised and not in touch with the language and real lives of people in a secular culture?
- Why has the church response been so poor? The national / regional church had the ability to support local churches but chose to issue more about what they could not do rather than what was possible. Why did national / regional church not help Local church with free resources Rather than make local church find their own way in terms of how to continue to deliver real church
- Why has the national Church hierarchy been so ineffective and missed such an opportunity to make its voice heard in the crisis and stand up for Christianity in the UK? Why is the Archbishop of Canterbury so divisive and ineffective a figure?

Faith

Indicative Question: What do we need to hold on to?

Faith: God is in control

- A prayer for the strength to deal with whatever is thrown at us- locally, nationally and globally
- Amazement at the number of people in general who still live with the concept of an all controlling god sitting up there somewhere and at the same time joy at how much of God's love and care for all creation has been released.
- Can't think of a 'Question', but have been very reassured by Gods presents and Peace
- Faith can overcome
- Faith has been tested but assured of God's continuing love for his people.
- Frustration...what can I do?
- Generally not thought about it, though it hasn't wrecked my faith or understanding of God in my life

- God and my faith journey is bigger than the church building. I have become more creative in my relationship with God.
- God has a plan. We need to keep in touch with [?] and give them hope.
- God is always with me and the death of my father has been far more dominant in my life during this period.
- God is with us, he is here put your faith and live in Him. We will get through this
- He is with us all the way
- Hold on. Everything passes.
- How can I let go of being in control and fully rely on God without feeling completely out of control/ powerless?
- How God loves us even though we show an immense capacity to be entirely stupid in how we behave!
- How is God relevant in the midst of disaster and panic, how does Jesus make a difference.
- How little control we have over our lives and how we can only trust in God to guide us to do his will
- How to have hope in all this darkness
- how to reassure people about God's love
- I am sure He has a bigger plan. Better things ahead for us to pray and trust in.
- I believe God is in charge of everything so no question
- I expect God to be where God always is; hovering over this murkiness, this tragedy, empathising with those who have lost loved ones and those fighting for their lives in Nightingale hospitals.
- I have been grateful to have the time for reflection and prayer
- I have been putting Covid-19 into an historical context. Just read 'I Claudius' about Rome in 1st century - incredible cheapness of human life. Then there is Ghenkis Khan wiping out all before him + Black Death and Spanish Flu + 1666's plague & great Fire of London. Faith in the goodness of God has been tested before and is again plus this time with Climate Warming threatening devastation in the background and soon to be foreground. All this tends to get me focus on the centrality of Jesus Christ.
- It has not raised any questions, only thanks for God's love, and the faith in our community.
- It has strengthen my belief god is control
- It has strengthened my faith
- Knowing that He is with us and loving us through all the trials we might face, and seeing His faithfulness in answered prayers.
- Learning deeper trust in the One who has the whole world in his hands
- No question. I have seen the Lord moving in wonderful ways during lock down, and I have revelled in the unexpected 'retreat'!
- No questioning but praise for my God who has kept me and so many others safe.
- None - God is still in charge and we need to continue to share Jesus.
- [God is] still God regardless and he did not create this mess
- Our G-d reigns and HE has not abdicated. My puny thoughts are sadly not His
- Out of bad comes good
- personal faith
- That all of what's happened is in God's plan
- That we are all in a relationship with each other and God is with us all in the suffering, pain, death and our healing.

- That we are living in end times and how important it is to trust God.
- That we should rest in the Lord and wait patiently.
- That without God life is hopeless and void
- That's a huge question! For me, it has brought me closer to God and deepened my faith - mainly because I've had more time to reflect and read the bible.
- The lockdown has not in any way minimised or adversely affected my concept of God, nor my faith. But I wonder about the world!
- The need for HOPE and gratitude. But also we have explored in our Bible Group (weekly) much deeper meaning and understanding of the Bible and God's Plan.
- The need to be faithful and hopeful
- There has been plagues since the beginning of time, COVID19 is the one in this modern age.
- Throughout all of this God has remained constant and when my faith has been tested and I've felt at my lowest I wish I'd gone to him first and saved myself some awful times of loneliness and anxiety. I'm not sure that lockdown has raised any questions about God or my faith. But there are lots of questions that need answering about the world and sadly they are mostly due to politicians and corrupt governments and the extraordinary behaviour of individuals during this very frightening time.
- To apply a Bible text to daily life: Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer [Romans 12: 12].
- Underlined the frailty of human plans and our dependence upon the grace of God
- What good will God continue to bring out of this crisis
- What is the place of lament, whilst still proclaiming Great is Thy Faithfulness
- You never know what the future holds; so hold fast to Jesus

Faith: Eschatology / End Times

- Biggest - probably is where we are now indicative of the end of times?
- Is this the end?
- Is this the plague of the apocalypse?
- No questions, just verification of the warnings to us and prophesies of end times.
- That we are living in end times and how important it is to trust God.
- The most important thing we can do is call on the name of the Lord for salvation, so that we are ready to meet Him at His coming.

Faith: Prayer

- Being able to pray
- That anybody can pray at home
- The need for more prayer and time with God.
- The need to pray.