

## **Lament**

We began the day by talking about those things which we have had to stop doing across the parish over the past couple of years both, impacted by both the pandemic and the interregnum. It was a rewarding session in which we could simply bring our grief before God. We read Psalm 88 which was intensely challenging! Much of what we talked about could be summed up in one word: lacking.

A large number of the post-its were around the impact on relationships with family, friends and others. The social impact of lockdowns was felt very keenly by many of the people there: not being allowed to spend time with others was truly hard, even for the quieter amongst us.

There were many which talked about particular events or services which had stopped such as 'Young at Heart' or 'Time Out' or simply the lack of Christmas services for the past 2 years. The impact of no singing in church was huge as well. We struggled with bigger issues as well – the impact of Brexit, the death of the Queen, the war in Ukraine to name but a few. These all press in on us and threaten to drag us down into darkness. But by lamenting we brought all of these before God and, in the words of the Rend Collective song which I used for the video, God weeps with us for them.

---

## **Celebrate**

We moved on after lunch to read Psalm 92 and celebrated what is good in the life of the parish. Many were grateful for the arrival of the new vicar(!) but there was much to celebrate once we began talking with each other. There are a number of social events across the parish, many centred around food or drink – a sense of hospitality – such as the coffee mornings, Cameo, upcoming Christmas events and so on. There was a sense of being able to use the buildings we are blessed with (church and others) for the community.

Many talked of the joy of interests which they shared with others and connecting with them. The welcoming nature of our church congregations was celebrated and the accessibility of our church to those who are not regular attenders, including those who come for baptisms, weddings and funerals.

There was mention of the other groups in the community such as schools and Scouts and the positive links which are there between these and the church. It was a great opportunity to celebrate all that is good in our parish and the positive experiences which we can all call to mind when thinking of our time spent involved in something linked with the parish.

---

## **Dream**

In our final session together we read Psalm 37 which I described as a Psalm of encouragement. We were all encouraged to talk about where we think God is leading us in our communities. There were some good conversations about the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the path which God sets before us. There was a sense of wanting to connect on a meaningful level with the younger adults and children in our communities – particularly the families.

There was also a desire to see more interaction between the congregations across the parish and sharing more with other people about our journeys. There were conversations about being more confident in what we believe in and sharing that with others. The idea of more events which forge and develop links between the church and the wider community was brought up by a number of

people. Eco Church and having a positive impact on the battle against Climate Change was a key part of the dreaming for some. Bringing people together and developing our social events while keeping ourselves distinctly Christian was an area which was identified as both challenging and rewarding!

It was suggested that we should form small groups across the parish, both for studying and being disciples together and also for sharing interests with others. We talked about making sure we understand the needs of our communities but also what is on offer outside of 'church life' and how we engage in a positive way with that without simply setting up in competition.

---

I was very encouraged by the Vision Day and a number of people have spoken positively about the time we shared together. While the first session was a challenge, it provided us with a good base for building upon as what has happened in the past has shaped where we are today and impacts where we will go in the future.

I believe there is much to be celebrated across the parish and I think it is great the number of events and activities which we already take part in or organise within our villages. There are clearly areas where we would like to be doing more (particularly around families) but there was the recognition that this also takes resources and we need to be wise how we manage the resources we have.

While the Vision Day gave us lots of ideas and generated many positive conversations, a vision doesn't give us a destination. Our journey as Christians is not about a destination. But by appreciating where we've come from (Lament), where we are (celebrate) and where we want to be (Dream) we begin to get an idea of the journey we are on with God as a community.

If I had to boil the ideas down to a single concept it would be one of our churches being hubs within the communities; places where people can go for support, for worship, for social events, for celebrations – for all sorts of things! But this vision will continue to develop over the coming weeks and months, it will involve conversations with the wider community and we will continue to evolve as a community in the months and years to come.

If any of you have anything else you would like to share (whether or not you were able to make it to the Vision Day) then please do send it through to me or grab me after a service some time to tell me about it. The vision of the parish is not one idea by one person but a collaboration of bringing many people together in a sense of what journey we are on with God. For now, keep your eyes peeled for more coming and keep the faith.

---