

Leicester Diocese Mission Audit Report

Spring 2006

St Peter's Braunstone Park – Christianity South Deanery

1. Brief Description

St Peter's is a small medieval village church, situated between a small medieval meadow ("Church Field") and a large council estate, built between the two World Wars. Originally sought after ("homes fit for heroes"), the Braunstone estate soon became neglected, then deprived. In 2001 it was the most deprived area in the East Midlands, and it is still the 9th most educationally deprived in the country. Its population is approx 13,000. St Peter's did a "parish audit" in 2003/4, based on 2001 census statistics and a series of walks round the streets of the parish – this gave us an insight into the make-up of our area, and still provides stimulation towards our mission.

The term "parish" is technically a misnomer. The first part of the estate to be built ("South Braunstone") was in the neighbouring parish of Holy Apostles, and the original Braunstone parish included not only "North Braunstone" but also Braunstone Town, another large residential area situated across the city boundary and consisting almost entirely of owner-occupied housing. In 2002 the Bishop of Leicester moved the parish boundaries in order to include the whole of the Braunstone estate in one pastoral and mission area, separating Braunstone Town off into its own parish and shifting "South Braunstone" from Holy Apostles into St Peter's parish. At the same time St Peter's moved deaneries, from Sparkenhoe East to Christianity South. All this was done for a 5-year experimental period, so that the two Braunstone "parishes" are in fact Conventional Districts. The 5 years expire in March 2007, and a review of the experiment is about to be carried out on behalf of the Bishop.

The overwhelming missionary motive for this change was that in 2000 the Braunstone Estate was awarded a government grant under the New Deal for Communities (NDC) scheme: £50million approx to be spent over 7 or 8 years. It was felt that such an investment in urban regeneration ought to be matched by a serious investment by the church – St Peter's has been well staffed and supported since, with a curate and community worker (and now a volunteer Reader) as well as the priest in charge.

2. Mission Audit – our method

St Peter's congregation is relatively small (30-40 on an average Sunday) and house groups are hard to sustain. We therefore decided to involve as many of the congregation as possible by discussing some open-ended questions after the Sunday Eucharist. Because some people moan when we keep them too long, we also decided to tackle only one of the 9 marks of a mission-shaped church each week – as it turned out, there were 8 weeks between Epiphany and the start of Lent, so we doubled up for one week.

We had thought (mistakenly) that the diocesan resources would be available before Christmas, so instead we devised a teaching scheme and a set of questions ourselves – one of the advantages of a large and coherent staff team! The particular Mark of Mission was chosen to fit the lectionary readings each week (they fitted reasonably well on the whole) and the questions were chosen to stimulate honest discussion – we did not want to do a bland "aren't we wonderful" audit, but rather, we wanted to learn where we need help as well as where we are strong. (See Appendices A and B.)

Each Sunday, therefore, there was a sermon on the particular Mark of Mission, explaining what it was and why it was important. We felt this was necessary before we sat people down over a coffee and asked them how they felt we were doing. This too is something of an innovation – our congregation are not used to being consulted, and always seem surprised when the vicar doesn't simply go ahead and do what he wants! But people did respond, and we had some lively discussions.

To record our findings we are using the nonogram provided in the diocesan website, with each radial marked according to the score we found. But we have included not only the consensus, but the range of opinion and in particular any "minority reports" where 1 or 2 people disagreed significantly with the consensus. This became significant even in the first week – see below.

3. The results.

3.1 Welcoming newcomers

Comments from discussions:

Would be good to have photos of office-holders

Welcome sheet (weekly sheet with diary, news, events and prayer list) is useful

“Welcome day” – a neighbouring church has “welcome tea-parties”

Annual Memorial Service is appreciated (make it more often?)

Be sensitive about inviting people to do things (not too soon after they first come)

Think about “2nd stage” when people aren't newcomers any more, and need to be incorporated into the fabric

A family feel to the church (not too big)

– but 2 long-standing members said they hadn't been able to break into a clique

Scores – Consensus 8, minority report 5

Comment: Ruth found St Peter's a welcoming church, but there is one and possibly two cliques!

MAST comment: We think we'd need more evidence to justify a score of 8/10 – are some of the comments aspirational rather than reality?

3.2 Nurture (“Learning and deepening in the faith”)

Comments from discussions:

Most shared individual experience rather than corporate – “I pray a lot”

Most people happy – but there's a desire to go further

“How do we know we're growing?” – being challenged, strength to go on.

Fellowship bonds help to keep going, persevere, not back off.

Vicar should make the tea more often!

Request for prayer for healing after the service.

Good to talk about sermons (over this Audit) – invite feedback through Welcome sheet?

Scores – Consensus 7/8, minority report 5/6

Comment: The vicar would agree with the minority report: we can't get an agreed date for a midweek meeting! But there's a desire for deeper prayer life, which we hope our Lent course will address.

MAST comment: again, we'd need more evidence – perhaps 5-6 would be more realistic?

3.3 Children

Comments from discussion:

Positive feeling – we've travelled on a journey (*from no children at all...*)

Efforts being made (eg at Baptisms) – good to have helpers from Holy Trinity

Shouldn't force children, set example instead. Opportunities for questions – see, hear etc.

Need to start small (Sunday School – Kidstuff also), build up capacity gradually

Scores – Consensus 7/8 (range 5 to 9)

Comment: This score flatters us – apart from Kidstuff which goes well with input from staff, we rely on Sundays on 2 young women from Holy Trinity. We have 2-3 regular kids and a handful who come occasionally – and our friendliness to them depends on their good behaviour!

MAST comment: yes, this score flatters you! But you're going in a positive direction – perhaps you need to talk more about Kidstuff St Peter's and your involvement in local schools.

3.4 Community Celebrations

Comments from discussion (after a sermon based on Occasional Offices and school involvement):

What does this mean? – B'stone carnival, Clean-up B'stone, Church Field opening, as well as baptisms etc.

church-based socials and special events (incl. Thanksgiving in autumn – a talking point – “I knew you were a Christian!”)

Carnival: we're a bit invisible in Tea-tent – why not a float? (milk-float??!!)

Find a point of interest & get stuck in (eg Blessed Sacrament and ASBOs meeting)

Carols at Turning Point (Women's Centre) were good
 Joint churches youth work?? (but our yp's not welcome at Baptist Ch?!)
 People say "It's our church" and more and more are coming for baptisms, weddings
 Links with schools – could develop these – how can ch mbrs get more involved?

Scores – Consensus 7 (range 5 to 9)

Comment: a lot of "Come to us" thinking – but we're alive to the opportunities to "go to them" too.
MAST comment: we think 7 might be about right. Remember the importance of going out as well as welcoming people in.

3.5 Sharing our Faith

Comments from discussion:

What does sharing faith mean? – trying to talk to someone about faith in Jesus – being with others, praying for them, sharing experiences, invitation to "come with me and see".
 Leading by example – imagination (recognising other people's point of view)
 Religion quite private – hard to talk. (Not push like JWs)
 Changes to parish – can't invite friends and neighbours to church because of where I live (in Braunstone Town) (*This needs to be addressed...*)
 Sharing faith at work – one person gives out little cards for encouragement.
 People notice we're different (but important as well to be "normal", have fun)
 "Some churches still thinking whether they need to do something – we *know* we must."
 Notices, advertising – work with other churches.
 Need to go on improving area (Braunstone's bad reputation is unfair.)
 We do go to where people are, and stand alongside them.
 Meeting needs, then being asked "Why are you doing this?"
 Importance of Sunday School – even if drift away in teens.
 How to tell the story? – instinct, intuition, spontaneous prayer. God prepares the way.

Scores – Consensus 7; minority report 2 ("We don't really know how to go about it")

Comment: no room for complacency. Is 2 a bit hard? (Is 7 rather generous?)
MAST comment: yes, 2 is a bit hard – maybe 5-6? It's important to build up people's confidence. You know you need to do something about it, so why not get some training, eg from Paul Rush (diocesan evangelist)? That would help you to be more confident about sharing your faith.

3.6 Rooted in prayer

Comments from discussion:

"Always praying" – regular prayer time and firing off prayers through day.
 Services pretty good – uplifting, help us to pray more.
 Importance of *asking* – and answers sometimes come even the next day.
 ("I prayed for my grandson – he was knifed in the back but rescued by a relative")
 Prayer is an emotional thing – needs patience.
 Practice leads to being rooted in prayer.
 Why pray? – thanks, for healing, for self, family, peace in world...
 Where/when? – anywhere, in car, 1st thing, last thing, in bed (*several*), when comfortable, when uncomfortable!... *No one said "In church!" – but they were thinking about it...*
 Sometimes hard – want more guidance how to pray, meditation meetings...
 More prayers from the congregation on Sundays? (but some like flow of non-participative intercessions)
 Answers to prayer – eg kind people appear, guidance...

Scores – Consensus 7, range 6-8, but minority report 4-5 (not enough happening midweek)

Comment: I was surprised how positive people were, about their own prayer lives and the help they get at least on Sundays. We're doing a Lent prayer course partly as a result of this discussion.
MAST comment: 7 about right. You could make more of Morning Prayer, inviting people to come and learn what it feels like to be "soaked in scripture"...

3.7 Changing lives and communities

Comments from discussion:

Individual lives changing – “We’re more content”

In community – fewer burnt-out cars, loads of community activities, less vandalism in local phone-box! – people are dressed better!

Not sure where St Peter’s contributes to this – or where the staff are involved.

People come to special events at St Peter’s: We’re in the *Alert* – noticeboards

More people choosing weddings, baptisms, funerals here (good reputation)

What do more to change lives, community? –

local choirs, concerts – make fetes more interesting – clothes shops

Second congregation on Sat. pm for people to dip their toes in – with different zones to try out...

It was good when Andy Vincent worked here – the church was more obviously open

We do respond to the community’s needs

Do we need a single Social Justice Issue to focus on? – eg Credit Union??

More Clean-up Braunstone days?!

“As a church we’re making an effort – and no one likes change”

Scores – Consensus 7 (but 9 for personal change)

Comment: Braunstone is changing, and the church is contributing to it, often in subtle unseen ways.

“Clean up Braunstone”, hosted by St Peter’s but run as a partnership by 2 community workers, is a good example of local church members getting involved, and influencing community change beyond its own capacity to do things. And individuals in the church are growing in confidence...

MAST comment: 7-8 about right. Can you make clearer to the congregation how their church involvement affects what they do?

3.8 Service in the community

Comments from discussion:

What do we do? – clean up B’stone, Kidstuff (children’s club), drive older people to clubs/bingo, one teenager acts as carer for her grandmother, BCA director (and theme groups etc), Special Needs group, Age Concern warden... BCA carnival tea-tent, teas at B’stone Hall consultation (we’re getting a reputation for teas!), services, Church Field, etc...

What more can we do? – work with other chs (as we are doing), more social events in hall?

more work in schools, (eg St Peter’s members telling their stories in RE), craft class for adults (we have some old-fashioned craft skills), holiday club for children, open day in church...

Clockwise (Credit Union), Cycle ride and walk for historic churches

Always room for improvement – but have to balance this with other things

Train people as deputies, then let them take on roles in church

Scores – Consensus 7-9, minority report 5, but staff were scored at 9 (and the teenagers gave us 10!)

Comment: The staff includes a full-time community worker and it would be surprising if we didn’t score highly. I think one or two of the discussion groups surprised themselves by how much the congregation do as well. The ladies who scored the church at 9 were also among the most involved.

MAST comment: Keep working on empowering people, helping them to make connections between church and community, and affirming what they’re already doing.

3.9 Inspiring and renewing worship

Comments from discussion:

What inspires? – hymns (esp rousing, eg Shine Jesus shine!), spiritual uplift, prayers for self and others, the togetherness, readings (give an insight)

What renews? – Communion, something to think about each day, time to be still/say Sorry, miss it when don’t come

Part of the rhythm of the week – ends one week, begins the next (and that’s renewing)

Other churches’ good ideas? – Bands! (but need short service too), songs that children learn, that we can join them with, more interaction in prayers, more modern hymns, (a lot that we

don't sing), good that we tell people about those who are ill, midweek services, eg early evening?

What does God think? – God enjoys every style of worship, as long as we worship him, not something else. Accepts us as we are, as long as honest and faithful. Disappointed when we're divided.

Scores – Consensus 8, with range 7-11(!). “Improved; not too formal; sincere; we worship rather than being entertained”

Comment: the revelation from this Mission Audit has been people's engagement with prayer and worship. Encouraging for the future, without tempting to complacency...

MAST comment: feels good, but need to go on being open to change. Connection between worship and service (think about the way you do intercessions...) – what about printing the rota for praying for streets in the parish, with the address list so people know when they're being prayed for?

Conclusions

We've noticed an openness to looking in new ways, and want to encourage this, especially in the connection between worship/prayer and service/outreach.

Appendix 1 – Draft Teaching Scheme for the 9 Marks

Date	Sunday	Readings	“Shaped by God” theme (draft)
Jan 8	Epiphany	Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:1-12 Matthew 2:1-12	Welcoming newcomers
(Jan 8)	Baptism of Christ	Genesis 1:1-5 Acts 19:1-7 Mark 1:4-11	Welcoming newcomers
Jan 15	Epiphany 2	1 Samuel 3:1-10 Rev. 5:1-10 John 1:43-end	Learning & deepening in the faith (& nurturing children?)
Jan 22	Epiphany 3	Genesis 14:17-20 Rev. 19:6-10 John 2:1-11	Celebrating community events <i>(an obvious gospel for “transformation” but see below)</i>
Jan 29	Presentation of Christ	Malachi 3:1-5 Hebrews 2:14-end Luke 2:22-40	Sharing the faith
Feb 5	Lent-4	Isaiah 40:21-end 1 Cor. 9:16-23 Mark 1:29-39	Rooted in prayer
Feb 12	Lent-3	2 Kings 5:1-14 1 Cor. 9:24-end Mark 1:40-end	Changing lives and communities
Feb 19	Lent-2 (creation)	Proverbs 8:1, 22-31 Colossians 1:15-20 John 1:1-14	Service in the community
Feb 26	Lent-1 (transfiguration)	2 Kings 2:1-12 2 Cor. 4:3-6 Mark 9:2-9	Inspiring and renewing worship

We usually choose 1 out of the 2 non-gospel readings – looking at this, it will be the OT more often than the NT. But we'll probably preach on the gospel mostly.

Appendix 2

How do we rate on the 9 Marks of Mission: Questions for discussion starters (leading towards the final question: "How do you rate us as a church, out of 10?")

Date	Sunday theme	Questions
Jan 8	Welcoming newcomers	Imagine you were a newcomer to St P's, what would you see, hear and feel that would help you know you were welcome? Just suppose you have been at St P's three months - you haven't yet been involved with anything more than attending on a Sunday morning but you'd like to get more included - what would you do? Who would you speak to? What sort of reaction do you think you'd get?
Jan 15	Learning and deepening in the faith (& nurturing children)	Just suppose you are feeling that your faith isn't going anywhere and you want to explore more about what God wants you to do. What would you do? Who would you approach? How would you know that you were growing? Imagine you were a child or you were bringing children to St P's. These children aren't used to church - how would you know they were learning what you think they need to about Jesus? What would they be saying or doing or feeling?
Jan 22	Celebrating Community Events	Given our change of parish boundaries, what are the Community events that you think St P's should be celebrating? Why? What other events could we get involved with or do even better? How would you go about making this happen?
Jan 29	Sharing the Faith	What do you think sharing your faith means? Perhaps you could give an example: either when you shared your faith or when someone else shared their faith with you. What do you think is going on when God is watching this happen, what do you think he's saying?
Feb 5	Rooted in prayer	What's happening when you pray? Why do you pray? When or where? Who do you know who prays? How effective do you think your praying is? When do you know God has answered your prayers? What extra help would you like with praying better?
Feb 12	Changing lives and communities	How have you noticed lives been changed in and around St P's? What has changed? Why? What could we do more of to make things even better?
Feb 19	Service in the community	What are the things that St P's does that serves the community? How involved in the community do you think St P's should be? What other things do you think we could do? How? Who? When? (Or maybe we're doing all we can - why do you think so?)
Feb 26	Inspiring and renewing worship	What really inspires you in worship? What do you really enjoy? When do you feel that our worship makes your life renewed? What do other churches do that we could adopt to improve our worship? What is going on in heaven when we are worshipping? How much do you think God enjoys our way of worshipping?

Appendix 3 – Our 9-pointed star

