

St. Mary's – What do you think?

YOUR FEEDBACK

The response to the feedback exercise has been wonderful. Between 20th April and 1st May, 61 questionnaires and 45 other comments (comment slips, letters and emails) were returned. This is clearly a lot of information, but as promised on 3rd May, the ministry team made a start on collating the responses. Simply from comparing the volume of responses on each issue, it was very obvious that it was the North Transept causing the most concern, so the ministry team focused on that, and also looked at the feedback on the back of church and the porch.

Those present at the ministry team meeting were Alan, Anthia, Liz, Olive, Rachel and Ruth.

The ministry team worked to identify the *strongest views* about each of the three areas. Obviously it would be impossible for this to be a totally objective exercise as we were working with open-ended questions, not yes-no answers. We were as objective as we could possibly be. We were careful, for example, to take at face value the information presented; we did not try to interpret it, make excuses or ignore anything.

The strongest views that emerged about the north transept were:

- The communication about it had been ineffective
- The 'trial' idea was not understood; it was intended to encourage 'blue-sky' imaginative thinking about what the area could be and look like, but the majority of people focused on the area as it appeared. Again, this was due to poor communication.
- The concept of 'flexible space' was not clearly understood, particularly as the area was generally thought to be a flexible space already. Again, due to poor communication.
- Many people did not want the altar rail and plinth to be removed. This was such a strong view that the ministry team agreed without question that they should be returned as a matter of priority.
- A definite majority liked the idea of it being flexible space, but within keeping the altar rail and plinth.
- There was a stronger preference for chairs, (rather than pews) but of the right kind; sturdy, suitable for the area and with somewhere to put books.
- It was good that the area had been tidied and unneeded items removed.
- There were questions about how the expense would fit in with general church strategy against other things perceived as priorities (e.g. the sound system, the leaking roof) and against other possible initiatives (e.g. work in the community).

The strongest views that emerged about the back of church were:

- The communication about it had been ineffective.
- The trial idea was not understood, as described above.
- There was strong feeling that the changes were good.

- There were suggestions for seating improvements – pew supports etc.
- The tea station needs to be fit for purpose.

The strongest views that emerged about the porch were:

- The communication about it had been ineffective.
- The trial idea was not understood, as described above.
- There was strong feeling that the changes were good.
- Points were raised about possible damp in the porch.

The ministry team also looked briefly at the comments on any other aspect of life at St. Mary's. There is a lot of information covering a range of issues. It is clear that there are problems that need facing up to and resolving. The ministry team is committed to working with the PCC to follow this through, and all issues will be considered and responded to in time.

As promised, the data collated so far, as described above, was presented to the PCC on 9th July.

It has recently been confirmed (by the Diocesan Advisory Committee) that no matter what we may like to do in the North Transept in the future, a faculty would be required to change anything, so the North Transept will be completely reinstated, as soon as possible. The only change is that the PCC decided that the blue platforms (not the altar platform, but those used for music performances sometimes) could be disposed of.

Because of the strong views that the changes at the back of the church and in the porch are good, the PCC agreed to leave the areas as they are for a further three months. During this time, a working group, (Carole, Rachel, Ruth, Sally and Sylvia) will finalise proposals for more permanent changes in these two areas. The proposals will be presented at the September PCC meeting.

The PCC also stressed the importance of communicating the results of the feedback exercise back to the congregation without delay.

The ministry team and the PCC would like to thank you all very much for joining in so wholeheartedly with the feedback exercise. It has been enormously revealing and helpful, and we will continue to build on these first steps towards much better communication at St. Mary's.

The Ministry Team
12th May 2016