Twenty per-cent of parishes growing

Although the latest Church of England statistics show a 1% a year decrease in church attendance over the last decade, David Nye, Chair of the DBF, struck a note of encouragement on our journey to reverse this when he told October’s Diocesan Synod: “Let’s praise the Lord because in over 20% of our parishes, church membership has increased and their congregations are growing. That’s surely a cause for celebration.”

“I asked our bishops for examples showing what difference our strategy was having. I am afraid there are just too many to read out.”

He then proceeded to pick out a few examples: “At Henlow and Langford, the Open the Book Assembly Programme is thriving and lay volunteers are reaching hundreds of children through simple dramatised retellings of Bible stories. Barne Churches Action, with significant Anglican input, has just opened Hope Corner Community Centre which provides catering for many local needs. Woburn is seeing significant growth in the number of young people attending church. Flitwick has seen increase of membership of over 60% in the last twelve months following the arrival of a new Vicar and a stewardship programme saw an increase in giving of over 40%. A new hub church has been planted in Hitchin (illustrated above). With the help of the church, a new Credit Union branch has been opened in Dunstable.”

Director of Mission Tim Lomax said: “We are hearing many good news stories of mission and growth from across the diocese. Through the Spirit’s work in each place, hope in the transforming purposes of God is increasing and confidence in communicating the gospel of Christ is strengthening. There are now 180 fresh expressions of church or new congregations with potential to mature by nurturing new disciples of Christ. Around two thirds of the people engaging with these new forms of church were previously unconnected to church.”

ASCEND celebrates 20 years of Service to South Oxhey

Community Charity ASCEND were joined by Bishop Alan at their 20th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service in October at which the South Oxhey Choir also made an appearance. Other celebratory events coming up include a concert by Face2Face on Saturday, 12th November, along with ASCEND Christmas Cracker Saturday, 19th November, 10.30am –1pm, with Christmas festivities and refreshments at Step Up, 39 Oxhey Drive, WD19 7SD. Full details from: [www.ascend.org.uk](http://www.ascend.org.uk)
In recent months several people have buttonholed me out of frustration that so many churches in the diocese are locked during the week, and sometimes there is not even a sign to show when a visitor can get a key. Locked churches tell visitors that they are not welcome. They give the subliminal message that the building is a club house for the ‘regulars’ who meet on Sundays. In contrast, unlocked churches proclaim that the building belongs to the whole community and that everyone is welcome to come in, whether to look at the architecture, study the history or (even better) to pray.

Now I am aware of all the problems and objections that will be raised when I talk about keeping our churches unlocked. Of course, we have to take sensible precautions by locking away any valuable moveable items, removing matches, securing larger pieces of antique furniture and, in some cases, even installing close circuit cameras. I also concede that there may be periods when it is simply not possible, for example, where a town centre has problems with people taking drugs in or around the church. Nevertheless they should be exceptions to the general rule of getting our buildings unlocked and open.

During the five years I was an archdeacon we logged all the instances of vandalism, theft and arson against our churches. What surprised us was that there were more problems associated with locked churches than with unlocked churches (indeed, the two churches which had been set on fire were both locked at the time). Part of the reason for this is that those churches which have decided to keep the building unlocked have engaged the local community to take responsibility for their church, encouraging people to walk in the churchyard and keep an eye on it. We need to send out a consistent message to the community: ‘This is your church, we’ve left it unlocked so you can come and go when you please; watch out for it, report anything suspicious and pop in as often as you can’. Many people are surprised to find that one of the largest insurance companies which specialises in churches, Ecclesiastical Insurance, encourages PCCs to get their churches unlocked during day light hours. I also believe that this is the best solution is to have as many activities going on in the church as possible. Recently, I visited the Meeting Place held in St Peter’s Church in the little village of Thurleigh in Bedfordshire. Once a fortnight on a Monday afternoon members of the congregation open the church for refreshments. It attracts a wide range of people – some older folk who come for tea and cakes, parents with their toddlers, and children on their way home from school, who enjoy the craft activities which are organised by a former teacher.

There are many other similar examples around the diocese, where congregations are running Messy Church, offering Lent lunches, organising children’s clubs, hosting a drop in centre for isolated home workers and sponsoring coffee mornings. In two places the church even houses the village shop. Whilst these activities must in no way detract from the prime use of the church as a place of worship, they are ways of putting the building back at the centre of the community. These are practical steps in Living God’s Love.

So let’s ‘Fling wide the gates! Open the ancient doors!’

bishop@stalbans.anglican.org
DBF Chair presents ‘Budget for Mission’, “so that more and more people may know the Good News of Jesus Christ”

“October’s Diocesan Synod approved the diocese’s budget for 2017. The budget supports our diocesan journey, Living God’s Love, so that God’s kingdom might grow and flourish in this diocese. Through the budget, the Board of Finance continues to finance this vital work so that more and more people may know the good news of Jesus Christ.

With over 40% of our parish clergy aged 55 or over and therefore retiring in the next 10 years or so, the last thing we want is to see a gradual reduction in their numbers, so we are continuing to increase the number of ordinations. We also need to remember that our diocese will see a large number of new homes built within the next 10 years or so and we will want to have the resource to minister to them.

We have included in the budget more resource for safeguarding our children and vulnerable adults. Every diocese is now subject to a safeguarding audit, investigating up to the last 40 years. As well as that, comprehensive training must be arranged for and attended by everyone who is regularly in touch with children and vulnerable adults and it is vital that our safeguarding procedures are kept up to date and seen to be working. This area of work simply has to be supported.

A little extra money is to be made available for the excellent work being carried on by the Board of Education working with 135 church schools and academies in the diocese. And more funds are being allocated to help with the training, planning and development of ‘Living God’s Love’ and ‘Leading Your Church into Growth’ courses.

Of course, the biggest cost to the budget is the bill for stipends and that will increase by 1.5% as recommended by the Archbishops’ council from 1 April 2017. We have identified some savings as well so that our resources can properly be directed towards the important aims of growing the church in this diocese both spiritually and numerically.

So the good news is that our budget next year continues to be focussed on our mission to all God’s people, continues to support the great work of parishes, schools and chaplaincies and is inspired by the desire to continue Living God’s Love with generosity and joy, imagination and courage. The cost? Less than 2% extra or an average of less than £1 per month per church member. Not much compared to what our Lord has done for us.” David Nye.

On 1 December a new website will go live, inviting people across the country to attend local parish services at Christmas. Parishes can visit: www.AChristmasNearYou.org/upload from NOW and complete a simple form no later than 1st December to register their Christmas church services.

Anyone will be able to find the nearest Christmas services to them (or search for services in a particular location). It will be able to filter by date, whether there will be carols and accessibility such as wheelchair access, sign language and parking and more. They’ll also be able to find which Christmas services are serving mince pies or mulled wine! For smartphones, the website will be able to use geolocation to find where the person is and show which Christmas services are happening nearest to them.

To promote the website and accompanying Christmas social media campaign, there will be four videos on the theme of Christmas Joy. The videos will star Gogglebox vicar Kate Bottley, comedian Paul Kerensa, Matt Woodcock (author of ‘Becoming Reverend,’ and Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Revd Rose Hudson Wilkin - each talking about a moment of Christmas Joy in their lives. The website will be supported by a social media campaign from the launch of the website, right up to Christmas Day using the hashtag #JoyToTheWorld. Churches from across the country will be encouraged to share photos/videos of their churches celebrating and asking the millions of people who attend church at Christmas to tweet about the church services and celebrations they have attended.
Our man in Calais

As the news of the imminent closure of the Calais Jungle brought children to Britain, the Revd Tony Rindl, Vicar of St Mary’s Watford, was heading in the opposite direction, taking a large consignment of tents, clothes, toiletries and food to those also in their final days in the Jungle, but with far more uncertain futures facing even more uncertain futures. He was travelling with Dame Helen Hyde, former Head of Watford Grammar School for Girls.

The idea for the trip had arisen when the two had first met, over a coffee in January. Finding that conversation had quickly turned to the plight of refugees across the world, they readily agreed that they could not be bystanders and do nothing, - they are both children of refugees - but the trip is only part of their response.

Wanting to pool their spheres of influence and considerable skills in education and community work, they created ‘Refugees to Recovery’. They could see that educating young people to engage in the issues facing refugees was vital. “to inform, to inspire, to action” seemed to be at the heart of what they were being called to do. At the beginning of October a conference for young people was held at the Girl’s school with around 100 people attending. Through drama, workshops and keynote speakers the participants learned about many of the issues concerning refugees today.

The trip came about because Helen and Tony realise they cannot speak about refugees without practically helping those who are need. Speaking about the trip, Tony said: “It is a privilege to be working alongside Dame Helen Hyde with her knowledge and influence. I have been astounded by the generosity and good will of the people of Watford. “Behind the headlines there are lots of good people out there wanting to help their fellow human beings. When chatting to my father, who was himself a refugee fleeing Austria in 1939, and telling him I intended to go to Calais he simply replied; ‘you must do this’.”
Dame Helen is a Holocaust Educator and left her Headteacher’s role in January specifically to work with refugees. She said of the present crisis: “Now is the time to take action.” On returning from Calais, Tony said that the trip was difficult to put into words, but he described some of his experiences: “It started to rain heavily as we stood in the Calais Jungle. Immediately we were invited into a shack belonging to Afghan refugees so that we could shelter: a simple act of kindness.

“I realise that Calais has come to symbolise the very complex nature of the refugee crisis. There is no simple solution, but we can at least begin with acts of kindness. “Thank you to those who donated items and to New Hope for providing the van. Our visit was timely and it is good to know clothing and other items could be distributed to refugees before the camp is closed down.”
What are our church buildings for?

As well as worship, so great is the range of activities in our churches that around 80% of the population visit one for some reason or another, every year (ORB research, 2011). Against that backdrop, a recent Guardian article by noted journalist Simon Jenkins, suggesting that small rural churches ought to be closed, (just as Beeching closed branch rail lines) because only a handful of people use some of them for worship is illogical. It drew a strong response, including from Revd Steve Wood, Vicar of Streatley, Bedfordshire, and a member of General Synod. He wrote:

“Simon Jenkins is both right and wrong about church buildings. Our thirteenth century village church last week held a communion service, a monthly family service, and a baptism. Overall attendance was two hundred and fifty. There was music, prayer, thanksgiving, story-telling for over fifty children and celebration aplenty. Our community comes to their village church because they feel welcome. Many will subsequently come to be married, or to have children baptised or to mark a loss. Of course, more occasional worshippers contribute only fractionally to average attendance, which was always an unsatisfactory measure of the deep and persistent thirst for spiritual meaning met by the rich diversity of churches up and down the land.

The overstatement of the Church of England’s demise is clear from recent rising cathedral statistics which measure the broader and deeper feeling that people have for church, the meaning of Christian faith in their lives as well as the building’s role as a place of history, beauty and architectural heritage.

Parish churches are not so different from cathedrals, merely lacking some of their advantages. They too can be both used and loved and avoid the errors of the “Beeching solution”. Local communities, worshipping and visiting contribute £795 million a year for churches and clergy, not ‘legendary wealth,’ and this mixed economy shows deep love for the church. It is better to have a railway line that goes somewhere, that connects with the trunk routes and is there when we need to travel with it.

Yours faithfully, Revd Steve Wood

You can read the other responses at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/14/churches-that-remain-open-in-times-of-sorrow-and-of-joy.

One of our rural churches which is used widely is St Faith’s Church and Community Centre, which is one of many examples of the resourcefulness of rural congregations and those that support them. In 2015, the Quinquennial Inspection confirmed that immediate attention was needed to repair the failing Chancel and Vestry roof and gutters, which were causing continuing structural problems to the Grade II*listed building, with damp and water ingress.

The work undertaken has included the upgrading of the gutter capacity and capability and the improvement roof ventilation and insulation, plus the refurbishment of the Vestry. The standard of workmanship and the level of cooperation received from the contractors, Bakers of Danbury, was excellent, say the church:

“We are very grateful for the help, and tolerance, of the DAC, the Registrar, the insurers (EIG), the Listed Place of Worship Scheme, our Ministry team, architect, and congregation, plus all other users of the building, during 7 month period of disturbance and dust.

Above all we are immensely grateful for the generosity and helpfulness of the grant giving organisations, without whom we would still be discussing what to do. Grants were received from Waste Recycling Environment Ltd (WREN), administered by the National Churches Trust (NCT), NCT itself, the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Historic Churches Trust, the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Allchurches Trust.”

As a result of this combined effort, the church has also been removed from the English Heritage/Historic England ‘At Risk’ register, which shows just what a great deal the parish has achieved.
Clergy Appointments

Canon Chris Beales, presently Vicar in the benefice of Woburn Sands, is to retire to Hartlepool in the new year.

Linda Bond, presently Priest-in-Charge in the benefice of Bromham with Oakley and Stagsden, is to become Incumbent of the same.

Victoria O’Neill, Assistant Curate in Training at the Church of the Transfiguration, Kempston, has changed name following marriage and will now be Victoria BRYSON.

Helen Gardner, previously Vicar in the benefice of Totternhoe, Stanbridge and Tilworth has just retired, seeking PTO in this diocese.

Diocesan Appointments

Women’s Ministry

Jeanette Gosney, has been appointed Dean of Women’s Ministry. She continues in her other roles as Parish Development Officer for the Diocese of St Albans and Associate Priest at St John’s Boxmoor.

Kate Peacock has been appointed Bishop’s Advisor for Women’s Ministry in Hertford Archdeaconry. She continues in her roles as Rector of Hornead, Wyddial, Anstey, Brent Pelham & Meesden and Rural Dean of Buntingford.

Dr Jane Mainwaring has been appointed Bishop’s Advisor for Women’s Ministry in St Albans Archdeaconry. She continues in her role as Team Vicar in Hitchin & St Paul’s Walden Team Ministry.

Lucy Davis has been appointed Bishop’s Advisor for Women’s Ministry in Bedford Archdeaconry. She continues in her role as Vicar in the benefice of Flitwick.

Canon Emeriti

Canon David Abbott was appointed Canon Emeritus in October. He was previously Vicar in the benefice of Sunnyside with Bourne End.

Canon Dr Anthony Sellers has just been appointed Canon Emeritus this month. He was previously Vicar of St Paul, Luton.

Honorary Canons

Jane Hatton (Hospital Chaplain, East & North Herts NHS Trust) and Michael Pilavachi (Pioneer Minister, Soul Survivor, Watford) are to be appointed as Honorary Canons for the Cathedral & Abbey Church of St Alban on Saturday 19th November at 4pm, during evensong.

Christmas Services of Lessons and Carols - St Albans Cathedral

The 2016 Festivals of Lessons and Carols will be held at the Cathedral on Wednesday 21st and Thursday 22nd December – both starting at 7pm. Entry to these services is by ticket only. Tickets are first offered to the cathedral’s own congregations and then the rest are distributed by public ballot. Please send applications to arrive by Friday 25 November to:-

Public Ballot, Services of Lessons and Carols, Cathedral Office Cathedral & Abbey Church of St Alban, Sumpter Yard, St Albans. AL1 1BY

Please enclose an SAE stating which night you are applying for, and how many tickets you would like (up to a maximum of four). Tickets will be sent out in the post from Thursday 1st December onwards.

Other opportunities to attend carol services include Carols on the Hour on Saturday 17th December with cathedral and local choirs singing from 11am to 4pm – no tickets required.

The College of St Barnabas - Appeal

Since 1895, the College of St Barnabas, an independent Anglican charity, has provided shelter and care to elderly and infirm Anglicans in need. The College has been the provider of last resort for Clergy, Clergy spouses, widows, widowers and Church Workers without means, offering sheltered accommodation, residential care and nursing care. Demand for their help has never been higher.

Their care makes a world of difference, transforming lives. This year, Archbishop Justin is supporting their appeal and this winter, The College of St Barnabas is asking individuals, PCCs and our Church communities to give – and to give generously - to enable them to continue this help. www.st-barnabas.org.uk/

read-archbishop-justins-support-of-our-christmas-appeal/
EVENT LISTINGS for November 2016

The Diocese of St Albans in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton & Barnet

Concerts & Drama

Church of the Transfiguration, Kempston, Bedford Rd, MK42 8BQ
Draw on Sweet Night: Music of love and loss. Programme of exquisite settings from the 16th century through to the 21st. Cantamus chamber choir, conductor Gary Mudd, Tuesday 8 November, at 8pm Tickets £7.50 (£5.00 concessions) on the door. Proceeds to church funds.

St Saviour’s Church, Sandpit Lane, St Albans AL1 4DF Radlett Choral Society Concert on Saturday 19th November, 7.30pm. Fauré - Requiem, J.S. Bach - Cantata 18, Alexander Flood - Born in Flight. With the Mariana Ensemble, Soprano: Sarah Gabriel, Bass: Samuel Evans. Tickets £12, accompanied children under 16 free.

St Peter’s Church Mill End, Rickmansworth WD3 7HQ. Rutter Requiem within a Sung Eucharist sung by Chiltern Hundreds Bach Choir and Chorleywood Chamber Orchestra conducted by David Cooke, on Sunday 20th November at 6pm. All welcome.

Christ Church Chorleywood, WD3 5SG. Adoramus Singers & Ensemble present ‘Gloria’ - on Saturday 26th November at 7.30pm. Baroque classics featuring Gloria by Vivaldi, and works by Manfredini, Albinoni and JS Bach. Tickets £10 (£5 for U16s), from Christ Church office 01923 282149 and www.wegotickets.com/adoramus.

St Peter’s Church Berkhamsted. Bridgewater Sinfonia concert with Chiltern Chamber Choir and soloists on Saturday 26th November at 7.30pm. Programme: Mozart - Overture Le Nozze di Figaro & ‘Requiem’ and Schumann - ‘Konzertstucke’. Tickets £15 in adv. £16 on the door, U16s free. Details 01442 873205 www.bridgewater-sinfonia.org.uk.

St Mary the Virgin, Goldington MK41 0AP. RSCM Bedford Regional Evensong for Christ the King on Sunday 20th November. Arrive at 3.30pm, 3.45pm rehearsal, followed by light refreshments before service at 6pm. Visit www.rscm-stalbans.co.uk for more info and application form.

Open Days & Festivals

St James the Great, Thorley, Autumn Craft Fair on Saturday 5th November 11.00am-3.30pm at the St Barnabas Centre, Thorley CM23 4BE. Lots of stalls inc gifts, art, jewellery, cards and much more. Refreshments & home-baking. Soup, bread & cheese lunches from 12. Win a Christmas cake.


St Mary’s Church, Carlton. Amazing Christmas Bazaar on Saturday 26th November 10am-1pm in Carlton Village Hall. Grand Draw at 12.30pm. Entry £1 for adults, children free.

St Mary’s Church, Ashwell. Christmas Fair will take place in Church from 9.30am – 2.30pm. on Saturday, 3rd December. Stalls will include Arts and Crafts, Cakes and Cards, Presents and Prizes. The Choir will sing carols and refreshments will be available. Winter Wonderland at the U.R.C. from 10.00am – 1.00pm and Village Museum open.

St Paul’s Church, Bedford. Christmas Tree Festival: Stars at Christmas Saturday 3rd - Sunday 4th December (12noon - 8pm) ‘Further Beyond Tango’ South American flavour with Adrian Varela. Tickets at www.bedfordhospitality.org.uk/southamericaconcert. Details for booking trees to decorate and concert tickets 01234 340163 admin@stpaulschurchbedford.org.uk or at www.bedfordhospitality.org.uk/treefest

ST Swithun’s Church Sandy. Christmas Tree Festival on Saturday 3rd (12noon - 8pm) and Sunday 4th December (12noon-6pm) Dozens of spectacular trees decorated by the community. Refreshments both afternoons. St Swithuns Singers perform at 2-3pm on Saturday.

Also Christmas Concert with Stotfold Salvation Army and other local groups on Wednesday 7th December at 7pm. Admission £4 in aid of Leprosy Mission, for more information contact Colin on 01767 682032.

St Ippolyts Church Crib Festival. Saturday 3rd - Sunday 4th December. Huge range of wonderful cribs of all ages and sizes. Entry is £2.50, children are free. Tea/coffee and delicious cakes are available. For details contact Barbara. thomas@live.co.uk 01462 421647.

All Saints’ Church, Houghton Conquest. Christmas Tree Festival on Friday 9th December (6pm-8.30pm) Saturday 10th (10-4pm) with 9 Lessons & Carols at 6.30pm and Sunday 11th (11-4pm). Admittance Free.

All Saints’ Leavesden, WD25 0LU. Christmas Tree Festival on Tuesday13th -Saturday 17th December 10 til late. 30 Trees sponsored and decorated by schools, community organisations and businesses celebrating the theme of Living God’s Love. Carols around the Christmas Tree, music and poetry recitals - visit www.all Saints life.com for full programme. Why not visit on your way home from work/school? Refreshments served in parish centre.

Talks & Courses

Equipping God’s People

Mission Action Planning Workshops starting 23rd November 9.30am-1pm
Workshop covers:
• Exploring vision for mission
• Identifying mission opportunities & community engagement;
• Effective action & progress monitoring.

See MAP leaflet in bundle notices for all the 6 available dates and venues.
Contact: Kathryn McNamara pdadmin@stalbans.anglican.org 01727 818151

SeeRound Online Events Nov 2016/10 p8 www.stalbans.anglican.org/news/seeround