

# Worship consultation at Christ Church

Rev Ian Lucraft

You know that I think that Sunday Worship is the 'engine-room' of a confessing congregation, where we meet our Lord in each other's company, refresh our souls, find the means to make sense of the world, and move out into next week with the echo of our Lord's words following us in all our duties.

I recently had the privilege of sharing in two thoughtful and interesting conversations with the members of the Worship Group, about worship at Christ Church. We were looking at our Sunday morning services, and thinking about what was good, and what we might want to improve on in the coming months and years. I thought you would all like to hear about the thinking of the group, and also a bit about how I hope I will be able to lead worship among you. So here is a short report, and at the end of the report is a "Consultation" form, because I would like to hear from anyone in the congregation with their thoughts and feelings about worship at Christ Church, and your ideas for the future. I've not written out everything we said in sensitive and open-minded conversations, but here is the gist. This is only about Sunday mornings. We will want to consider other worship as we proceed later.

We were pleased that many people actively participate in the worship at Christ Church, either by planning or taking services, or special events, or by reading, or leading prayer, or speaking. We noted that the possibility of my time at Christ Church means that I will usually be able to be with you on Sunday mornings once or twice each month to provide some continuity, and at the same time we will still have the richness and diversity of thought that other preachers bring to our services.

We recognised that many people with long experience of worship appreciate a more traditional form of service, and it will be important that they can still benefit in future from worship that speaks to them, and in which they feel comfortable. On the other hand it is equally clear that children and young people and younger adults are desperately hoping that we can break free sometimes from the 5 hymn sandwich, and that if we are to create a welcoming church for them, we will need to be more alive to modern trends in worship, music, song and expression.

My own feeling is that you can't do everything in one service; you end up pleasing no-one! So I am clear that we need to be able to provide worship that feeds the souls sometimes of older and sometimes of younger members, and always of new people that we hope to attract.

As a first step, I will plan to use the monthly Holy Communion service as a more traditional service, with well-known and loved hymns, and at the other service I conduct each month, though it might not always be exactly two services each month I can lead at Christ Church, I will prepare a morning service that is more open to new expressions of worship. This won't be "way-out" or uncomfortable, but it seems to me that the key issue will be whether we are all willing to share in each type of service. I am convinced that no-one will say "If I can't have what I want all the time I won't come when it's not exactly what I want." I am sure everyone will recognise that in sharing in worship with each other, in different ways, we are going to enter into each other's discipleship, and because we will know that we are all being respected, and the types of service we want are genuinely available, then we will all be able to meet our Lord every Sunday, in each other's company.

There are some aspects that I think it is important to hold onto, whatever type of service we have, when I am leading our service:

- there will usually be a new hymn or song to learn, (or one we recently learned, and liked, to try again),
- we will always strive to sing up, and I will encourage you to do so!
- we will always value the contribution of the choir and involve them as much as possible to enhance our worship,
- we will always have a place for children in our services, with some activities for them to do in church,

- we will always welcome the children into the communion service,
- we will use various forms of service for the communion service,
- we will always share our joys and concerns as far as we feel able,
- we will not fix a rigid order of service,
- we will always use relevant language,
- we will involve more people than just the minister in the services,

There were one or two other things that emerged from the conversations:

- the prayer cell before church provides a quiet and confidential place for prayer, and we will support it and try to make it easier for them to meet without feeling uncomfortable,
- I am going to think through with the Junior Church leaders how they can be supported and how we can make the best use of the skills of the parents of the children who go to Junior Church,
- we may have a series of Sundays on a “theme”; one that springs to mind is “Who is Jesus for us today?”,
- I will work with others to help co-ordinate the arrangements for Sunday Mornings, so that it does not all fall on a few shoulders, either for Junior Church or the Worship Group,
- we welcome the other forms of worship, cafe church, reflective meditation, and the prayer cell, and while each may not be for everyone, though everyone is always welcome at them all, we are pleased that a rich variety of forms of worship form part of the life of our church,
- there will be times when it is right to move the chairs round to facilitate the worship on that Sunday, and I will always take account of the choir when I do that.

#### ..... and finally

I was moved in the Worship Group to hear tell of the link you once had with a person in Africa, whom you supported by your prayers and by your actions in buying a motor-bike to enable the people to get round the distant churches in the area. And I heard also how you were able afterwards to reflect on that, partly through the gift from Africa back to Stocksbridge, of the colourful banner that still hangs in the church.

I had been wondering how we would be able to share our Christian lives with others outside Stocksbridge in some meaningful way. I’m not thinking just of raising money, though a little fund-raising to support a struggling village might help us understand the lives of others over the coming years. I was thinking more about trying to create a real living relationship, by letter, photo, shared blog on a website, whatever, so that we could be part of each other’s worshipping community.

And here in the Worship Group I hear of this link in the past, and wonder whether this is not the right time to try and find a small church, perhaps with a women’s co-operative, or school, or a travelling person, pastor or health worker, or teacher, and see how we could have a commitment to each other. It could be any of these things, and we could ask the URC and Methodist church groups responsible for such links to help us make a good choice. Or someone may have their own good ideas.....

Anyway, I commend this report to you, and invite you to express your own thoughts as we think how to make Sunday mornings the best expression of our faith in Jesus we can. Please take a few minutes to think about the questions on the consultation form, and say what you want to say. Everyone’s opinion is to be heard. There is a “Consultation” box in the north porch for your responses. Thank you.

*Jon P. Lucas Jr*

# Worship Consultation

Please use this form to help Ian to understand what you are looking for in our worship at Christ Church.

You don't have to answer every question.

If there is just one you want to comment on that would be great.



*Do you have any comments to make on this report?*

*What are you looking for from our Sunday Morning services at Christ Church?*

*What do you like about the current morning services?*

*What changes would you like to the current morning services?*

*What would make morning worship more meaningful for you?*

*How could we make our Sunday morning services more attractive for new members?*

*How should we plan to work with children in our morning services?*

*What do you think about the idea of forming a link with a person or place in Africa to share our Christian lives?*

*Will you be able to come to the Toy Service on Sunday 2 December with a small toy?*

*If you want Ian to know about your thoughts please write your name in this box; but you don't have to!*

**Now please drop your feedback form in the "Worship Consultation" response box in the North Porch. If you want to write more, please use another sheet of paper.**