

# St. Hilda's Transforming Church Questionnaires' Results

We had a total of 27 returned and completed questionnaires. Eight people had signed and 19 were anonymous. Some of the replies were quite detailed, qualifying the point made; some were very brief. The replies were varied but lots of synergies were present. Therefore the comments have been "grouped" under headers and then listed below are some examples of the comments. The percentages are round-ups.

## What do you think our greatest strengths are?:

Every questionnaire had replies to this question and on some, there were additional comments. We had a total of 83 comments – against an expected 81.

| <i>We can group these comments into the following areas:</i>   | <i>Number of replies:</i> |             |
|--|---------------------------|-------------|
| <b>The friendliness of the congregation &amp; the atmosphere generated at the church.</b><br><i>"Our friendliness as a Christian community."<br/>"A friendly and welcoming church."</i>                            | <b>18</b>                 | <b>22%</b>  |
| <b>The support for each other amongst members.</b><br><i>"Our supportive concern and care for one another."<br/>"Loving care and support shown in times of need."</i>  | <b>13</b>                 | <b>16%</b>  |
| <b>The longevity of St. Hilda's and its congregation.</b><br><i>"The present culture must appeal as the church has survived for over 100 years."<br/>"Steadfastness of some of the long-serving congregation."</i> | <b>11</b>                 | <b>13%</b>  |
| <b>The young people attendance at St. Hilda's.</b><br><i>"We cater for children."</i>  | <b>2</b>                  | <b>2.4%</b> |
| <b>The youth activity groups in St. Hilda's.</b><br><b>2.4%</b><br><i>"Young peoples' groups (Scouts, Guides etc) bring in new people with good opportunities for outreach."</i>                                   | <b>2</b>                  |             |
| <b>The variety and perceived quality of services in St. Hilda's.</b><br><i>"Different "styles of worship" "<br/>"The traditional style services are usually very well attended"</i>                                | <b>7</b>                  | <b>8%</b>   |
| <b>The Vicar and the leadership.</b><br><i>"Leadership- appears to be very open, listening, motivated and seeking after God's will. Very prayerful."<br/>"New priest. Paul is great!"</i>                          | <b>6</b>                  | <b>7%</b>   |
| <b>The church building and grounds.</b><br><i>"It's a well kept, well cared for, welcoming building."<br/>"We have a beautiful church, which provides peace and comfort with all facilities required."</i>         | <b>10</b>                 | <b>12%</b>  |
| <b>The participation of volunteers.</b><br><i>"Lots of parishioners do voluntary work for the church – especially the older members."</i>  | <b>3</b>                  | <b>3.5%</b> |
| <b>The choir and music produced in St. Hilda's.</b><br><b>8.5%</b>   |                           | <b>7</b>    |

*"Music and orchestra."*

*"The music – choir, orchestra and the fact that we enjoy singing."*

**The adaptability and will to learn of the congregation.**

**2**

**2.4%**

*"Willingness of most of congregation adapting to new situations."*

**The social activities provided by St. Hilda's.**

**2**

**2.4%**

*"Lots of church activities."*

Conclusion.

It appears that most people found this question the easiest to answer and replied enthusiastically. There is a variety of opinions but most people agreed that the greatest strength St. Hilda's possess is its congregation: its ability to generate the right kind of environment, the support it exudes for each other and its longevity. Also the role of the congregation on lay-leadership, the participation and the quality of the choir and the numbers of volunteers in facilitating the running of the church services and social activities, were mentioned. The people of St. Hilda's are obviously and for various reasons, considered its greatest strength.

In addition a lot of merit was identified in the church building and grounds. People take pride in the building and grounds commenting that they find it beautiful and welcoming.

There was positive opinion for the variety and quality of church services. Some people seem to be reasonably content with the current format and content of services as well as the leadership during church services.

**What do you think our three greatest weaknesses are?:**

66 comments

**Unnecessarily changes our ways/Too many changes.**

**4**

**6%**

*"Trying to mend something that isn't broken! So we rush headlong into change unnecessarily."*

*"Too many changes too quickly. Church liturgy is important and should be constant."*

**Minority making decisions & dominating /most not being heard.**

**8**

**12%**

*"Only listening to the loudest, most persistent voices – they DO NOT have all the answers. What happened to the "still, small voice" ??"*

*"Rather to cliquey. No one member... should be more important than another."*

*"There is a minority in the church who are having a too great influence on the way the church is going to operate in the future."*

**Church is too formal, traditional and busy whilst lacking variety and the willingness to change.**

**14**

**21%**

*"Some services are very formal with language and traditions which new comers may find off-putting."*

*Realising that the church should also be a haven of peace and prayer and not always a busy building bombarded with noise."*

*"Acceptance of change." "The inability to change."*

*"Understanding the needs and variety of worship for the varying groups of worshippers."*

**The lack of youth in the congregation.**

**15**

**23%**

*"Very few youth and young twenties."*

*"The missing age group: 18-40 year olds."*

*"Age of most of congregation."*

*"Lack of younger congregation."*

*"Has anyone looked at the age-ranges we are missing from church and then looked to really find out why?"*

*"We have nothing in church for the youth."*

*"Engagement in youth is limited, especially teenagers. I'm not sure how much the Guides and Scouts link in with the church."*

**Lack of Children's facilities** 1 1.5%

*"Poor hospitality for children attending church: no juice on table, only tea and coffee. Lacks imagination."*

**Lack of support for other services** 1 1.5%

*"Baptism and Parade services are only supported by a small part of the congregation."*

**Complacency** 1 1.5%

*"Complacent."*

**Lack of a good Sound System and Audio/Visual facilities** 4 6%

*"Sound system – need speakers in choir gallery."*

*"Use of A/V materials."*

*"Poor sound system."*

**Lack of social events** 1 1.5%

*"Not enough social events."*

**Church building and appearance** 2 3%

*"Welcome. (Gloomy porch – jumbled notice boards) No imagination."*

**Hymns** 1 1.5%

*"Too many of the older hymns are used which young (and old) people find boring, instead of more of the lively, modern hymns. Many of the old hymns are well loved (especially by the choir) but if we want to encourage young people, we have to consider them."*

**Finances** 1 1.5%

*"Finance – failure to pay common fund or include "Christian Mission" (not charities!) commitment in annual budget."*

**Temperature** 1 1.5%

*"Cold at times, so members aren't comfortable."*

**Communication** 3 4.5%

*"Communication breakdowns."*

*"Communication – not easy to get a grip on where we are going (e.g. children in worship)"*

**Outlook to the wider world** 9 14%

*"Insularity – in worship and conversations – little about wider world, issues, wider church."*

*"We don't encourage the wider community to come and join us."*

*"Inward looking – the wider church and world don't feature much."*

*"Global perspective e.g. overseas mission, environmental issues, poverty."*

*"Not enough events to attract people off the streets i.e. coffee mornings, table top sale, "open church mornings.""*

One questionnaire replied, "Non apparent" to this question.

## Conclusion.

This question prompted the greatest variety of general response. The majority of opinion appertained to the lack of youth in St.Hilda's. It was mentioned numerously that there was little or no youth involvement in the services. Age ranges of 18-40 were mentioned so people are perceiving a chasm between young children from playgroup and the over 40's.

In contrast to the comments made in the "strengths" question regarding church services, we had a number of responses identifying the traditional services and formality of the church as a weakness. Furthermore the perceived unwillingness to change was mentioned. Opposing this, there was opinion alluding to too much change when it is unnecessary or wrong to do so.

The lack of proactivity in the community and knowledge of the wider world issues were commented upon. The lack of a community service in order to attract newcomers was mentioned as was the opinion that St.Hilda's didn't really deal with issues in the community or world; instead being too insular and only focussing on itself and its own issues.

In slight contradiction of the "strengths" point commending St. Hilda's for the running of the church, there was opinion in this category that too few people were making to too many decisions and others' voices were not being heard.

## **What would you identify as the three main opportunities for our growth, development or outreach?:**

### **Proactive programme of outreach to the community**

**22**

**30%**

*"Offering the community something it wants and needs e.g. a meeting place/coffee shop."*

*"Connecting with people where they are in their life and realizing that church, theology and doctrine do not mean anything to a vast majority of people."*

*"Utilize the church hall to hold coffee mornings."*

*"Possibly more publicity about church events and organisations e.g. notices in libraries, community centres etc."*

*"Invitation series – and well advertised."*

*"The first outreach should be to the families of those who attend church. If they all attended regularly then the church would be full."*

*Baptism, Weddings and Funerals: We need to ask why people are not required to attend before baptism and weddings. Why do we never see most people ever again?"*

*"Have more events like Back-to-church-Sunday."*

*"Targeting the groups that already use the church premises."*

*"More could perhaps be done with parents and children from the Playgroups and Mothers and Toddlers, also the under ones without the family feeling pressurized."*

*"The CAMEO club might be a source of new church members, as many of the people attending do not come to church and perhaps need encouraging."*

*"Forge links with the wider church through one of the mission societies."*

*"Invitations to the parish to "Meet the parish" i.e. finding opportunities to simply chat and get to know other in the parish."*

### **Youth group/activities and opportunities with youth**

**20**

**27%**

#### **Including our uniform organisations**

*"We need to keep our young people – a youth club on church premises."*

*"More involvement with the uniformed groups."*

*"Roles for young people: meetings, groups etc – Need a leader."*

*"Encourage the group-leaders (organisations) to take more of a role getting their members into church."*

*"More involvement from uniformed groups."*

*“The uniformed organisations, play group and Sunday school are based at St. Hilda’s. These children and their families who live around the church are the greatest potential for the long-term development of St. Hilda’s.”*

*“Ministry to and of children and young families. Facilitate them having a real voice in the church.”*

*“Youth get-togethers e.g. film nights, not overly Christian.”*

*“Develop provision for youth. Relevant worship which may take a variety of forms.....like “Reunited”. Also make connections stronger with local schools.”*

### **Social Groups**

**5**

**7%**

*“To have a social meeting like W.O.W. where Christians can share there faith/like-mindedness together before converting others.”*

*“A women’s group would be helpful – not too heavy – social activities are a good idea.”*

*“Widening other activities.” (to appeal to all of the congregation)*

### **Use of the church building**

**6**

**8.25%**

*“Make the front door more attractive and welcoming.....Advertising board more attractive/bolder.”*

*“Make more use of the church hall with some of the events (such as) Coffee mornings, Table top sales, Open church mornings.”*

*To hold “lifestyle courses or events...Confidence Building, Anger Management, Parenting, Debt Advice, Relaxation.”*

### **Formation of pastoral groups and new lay readers**

**2**

**3%**

*“Formation of pastoral teams.”*

*“Recruitment drive for new lay readers to get fresh faces and new talent into the church.”*

### **Evolution of church services**

**17**

**23.25%**

*“New styles of worship and language in services (Parade) which the un-churched can understand.”*

*“Showing through prayer, teaching and testimony that the Bible is relevant “today” in this very different world.”*

*“More family events within the church.”*

*“Develop together worship as mission.”*

*“More upbeat hymns/happy clappy music.”*

*“Continue to develop lay leadership in worship.”*

*“More silence in Intercessions enables personal prayer.”*

*“Explore possibility of establishing a “One World” or “Justice and Peace” group for any in Warley concerned with justice, not just Christians. Could be ecumenically based.”*

### Conclusion

Overwhelmingly, opinion was that St. Hilda’s needs to become more proactive and in particular, targeting not just the community but the younger sections of the community and utilizing St Hilda’s facilities. According to suggestions, this can be done by providing some community services; there were numerous mentions of coffee shops or coffee mornings; hosting lifestyle courses which fit the needs of the wider community i.e. debt advice, anger management; and a women’s group, similar to the previous W.O.W.. People have identified that a potential to grow the congregation is available in the groups that already attend St. Hilda’s current activities such as Mothers and Toddlers, C.A.M.E.O, Playgroup, the uniformed organisations as well as the families of the current congregation. If these groups’ opinions were sought, it might allow St. Hilda’s to meet demand and encourage more people to the church for worship. It is clear that a Christian approach i.e. the ministry to and of children, was mentioned, and a, to begin with, non-Christian approach i.e. film nights, not overly Christian, is what people are suggesting. Adjunct to this would be the style of worship and relevant church services. There is an opinion that suggests a more modern service is called for so that new-comers to services would see that church is

relevant today. This would involve more upbeat hymns and a change to liturgy, making services and teaching more relevant to the world today.

There is also some opinion suggesting the church's appearance needs to be attended to. In particular the notice board and front door area are mentioned.

*I would like to thank Richard Haynes for all the work he has done on this. Richard has carefully and very faithfully reproduced exact quotes from all the questionnaires and collated the information painstakingly. He has also helpfully pulled together some concluding thoughts. With thanks, Paul.*