

RESPONSES

When have you felt closest to God in your church?

CONTEMPLATION

Silence; quietness in church; prayers different types, meditation, during meditative worship; atmosphere of church makes me feel close to God – it's a special place; being in God's house anywhere in the world; in the church alone

Quiet hour services

PRAYER

Listening to heartfelt prayers – liturgy can make you switch off; prayers of different types; power of prayer, corporate prayer with a common purpose;

When I needed God and I was ill the vicar blessed me; at emotional times eg milestones

ATMOSPHERE

bubbly atmosphere, fellowship before after services; people being welcoming, atmosphere; social aspects, welcoming people showing an interest in you;

TEACHING

during sermons – how the vicar reaches you
We need a spiritual leader

SERVICES

during Eucharist; at the altar
Easter Vigil – a real sense of connection
Christmas & Easter
During hymn-singing; at worship – music, words of hymns
Personal celebrations eg christening (of my children), when I got married

WORKING TOGETHER

Sharing talents

How and when has your church made the biggest impression in your community?

OUTREACH

Lamplighter bookshop: outreach, social events, lonely people can drop in for a chat
Events to bring people in; working together with other churches;
Coffee mornings
Musical events, Gower Show & service; Peace Mala, war memorial/holocaust funding project; aid to Bosnia project – reaching out to others

Working with other churches from other traditions

DISASTERS

when vandals broke windows and community came together & helped to repair; when there's a disaster

YOUNG PEOPLE

Candlelit Christmas service, involvement of children; schools contact, youth club

SERVICES

Funerals, weddings, christenings

If we knew the answer to this we wouldn't be here!

Is this the right question? Shouldn't we be asking 'why isn't it?'

not sure whether church is very visible!;

As we gather as God's people

What are the different ways in which you gather in God's name? Can you imagine additional ways of gathering that could help newcomers to belong?

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Services involving children, youth groups; be more accepting of younger people: have fun, bring young people together – clubs with a bible study, something livelier,

ACCEPTING

be acceptable to all ages and backgrounds

Joint services between benefice churches (on neutral territory in church hall) – it has attracted new people

Joint church Easter service at Cefn Bryn

making the message more accessible to everyone of all ages and backgrounds; church should be broader and more inclusive in the community

open up churches

warm, comfortable, welcoming church

recognising you're new

COMMUNICATING

reach out through adverts, local media,

church noticeboard

congregational meetings not only PCC

NOT JUST IN CHURCH, NOT JUST ON SUNDAYS

meetings outside church building in other halls eg schools; in houses, village hall – community services

events/services not just on Sundays

SOCIAL

variety of social events

going to people's homes

fellowship after service

SMALL GROUPS

prayer & bible study groups - housegroups, confirmation prep.,

SERVICES

Remembrance Day, Christmas, Eucharist & other services

IMAGINATIVE MUSIC

mix up the music eg Laudate Dominum & secular, Mozart, make it educational

INTEREST GROUPS

choirs & drama groups, sport, football/rugby teams

visiting retirement homes, hospitals etc

There are endless ways

If you were to move to a new area, what would make you feel welcome in the local church?

WELCOMING

Make the church welcoming; being greeted on arrival; a smile

times of services should be on display – St Gwynour's

provide tea and coffee

ACCESSIBLE

'try church out' sessions – half an hour, make services more user-friendly less intimidating; people can be put off by liturgy, explain liturgy

Sit next to newcomer & explain service/liturgy

Services apart from Sundays at different times
Services not in church building

INVITATION

being personally invited to take part in groups to feel part of things;
don't pounce on people,
asking if they will come back again without being pushy
prompt a new neighbour to visit or ask the rector to call

SOCIAL

have social, non-church activities

OUTREACH

outreach – nursery, mother/baby groups, assemblies in schools

As we grow more like Jesus

Draw a time line of your Christian journey, marking on it the times when your faith has been most important to you. What were the most significant points of growth?

Some personal stories:

Alun Tregelles Williams

Alun felt that his baptism by total immersion was a key moment in his life, particularly that it was his father who baptised him. This is when he made a personal commitment to faith. Alun loved music in the church as a teenager and this helped him to stay committed. He had a grounding in the faith and that key moment of baptism has empowered him to play his part in the church.

Person no.2

Now: What is next, where am I being lead, should I do some ministry, study?

Person no.3

Hated Sunday school, but was made to go by a parent. Had an argument with the parent which led to the person being able to have freedom to decide what they wanted to do for themselves. At 14 they decided to get confirmed as a personal choice;

Maggie

God is faithful and answers prayer: should I go to France on holiday or stay at home and help husband with ecumenical event? Had vision 'Damascus rd moment'. God said 'take your light to France where you can make a difference'. They went to France and held a communion for their friends, but no-one went apart from them. Years later she found that her friends had become Christians.

More points of growth: joining a church choir, confirmation, wartime

How can you help people deepen their faith journey?

DISCIPLESHIP

Example eg be the body of Christ
lead by example,
sharing our own faith,

APPROACHABILITY

being non-judgemental, having friendly clergy who are approachable,
listen
don't start with faith – you're there to help; you may get to faith or you may not
Not imposing one's own view – it's about them, not me
Don't venture an opinion unless asked

OFFERING PRAYER

Pray for them – God is faithful and does answer prayer
counselling & standing alongside people eg counselling bereaved widows drawing on my personal experiences;

OFFERING SUPPORT

supporting them: sharing their joy and sorrows, don't start with faith but by standing with people – about them not about us, let people grow.
Walk them through their doubts

INVOLVEMENT

drawing in people by helping them get involved in an activity that interests them, then developing their faith;
getting people involved in services;
MU, Young Wives

STUDY & SPIRITUALITY

bible study, Living Faith course, read lives of saints
retreats, pilgrimage, cathedrals
we do not have enough faith-deepening activities – need to grow and deepen faith outside services;

going out into community, pointing people to God, not focussing on ourselves,

As we go out in the Power of the Spirit

Share an example of how your Christian faith has influenced your decisions or actions in your daily life.

Ann Tovey

we have to 'stand in other people's shoes' and support them in their need; we need to say 'what would Jesus do in a given situation?' eg difficult lodger shall I evict him? Decided to talk situation through instead of eviction led to reconciliation; continue his good work;

Carrie

Since becoming a Christian my life has changed. I am no longer judgemental, see people differently and now want to speak out against injustice and do acts of kindness.

Emilia

After a bereavement I realised my own mortality and let go of controlling my life

Our faith can be like writing through a stick of rock – can be unconscious; impossible to separate – all pervading

Compassion & altruism

faith keeps us human through seemingly impossible situations;

this morning is evidence of the Holy Spirit at work;

Listening to God rather than ourselves; letting God have his way;
letting someone go (dying);
furthering the kingdom through Lent eg money saved to charity eg sponsor a child

good works, continuous

Share something that is happening in your Church that is a clear example of the power of the Spirit at work.

EXPERIMENTING WITH CHANGE

Changes to church possibly through different approaches the congregation can grow

CHANGING ATTITUDES

Church being accepting of all people – vicar's role here can be crucial in encouraging others; congregations need to alter their attitudes to make it more people friendly

THRIVING MUSIC

Musical life is the most powerful sign at St Teilo's, takes dedication & time, attracts people of all ages;

ENGAGING TEACHING

modern sermons, engaging; all attracting more young people
sermons need to be realistic like Christ's parables

INCREASED ATTENDANCE

Size of St David's quadrupled after 21 years

Difficult to give a clear example, but as our church is still open this is a sign the spirit is working!

People visit and stay

OFFERING SUPPORT

Church gave comfort to a couple in difficulty – they have stayed, church has seen them through lows and highs and it has affected that couple's faith. We comfort them then sustain them through prayer.

OUTREACH

The Lamplighter – vision of previous rector's wife. Building became available, out of price range, owner was Christian & leased it for peppercorn rent. Owner put it up for sale, but new owners also Christians so shop is still safe. God's hand was in that project.

Youth club – Am I Bovered

Building a church kitchen