

The Parish of Kingswood in the Diocese of Southwark

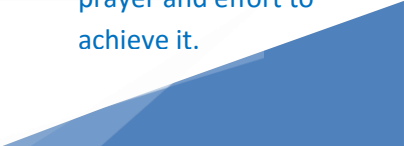
# Summary of Responses

to the

## Parish Survey

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**your thoughts ...**

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## Summary of responses to the Parish Survey

### Introduction and Background

In preparation for the drawing up of the Mission Action Plan for the Parish, a consultation exercise was undertaken amongst parishioners, local residents and other interested groups. Everyone was invited to fill in a short questionnaire that sought to discover, their likes, preferences, desires and aspirations for the two churches within the parish, their thoughts on their own contribution and any other comments they wished to make.

The questionnaire was issued in March 2016 and twenty-two people responded, either on paper copies, or online. Although a small sample, those who responded did so fully and constructively, and have provided a solid base of information on which we, together, can build our plan to grow our churches.



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The questionnaires have been analysed and the results collated in order to produce this report. The questionnaires were offered anonymously, and thus individuals will not be quoted, although some verbatim from the questionnaires will be used.

This consultation has been successful in helping us to understand the strengths and opportunities that are presented by our Churches, and a similar exercise of consultation should perhaps form a regular part of our approach to delivering our Mission Action Plan.

To all who responded to the questionnaire, my heartfelt thanks for your openness and honesty. There is much for us to do in the parish, but the future looks exciting if we can work together in prayer and effort to achieve it. The understanding we achieve through this process will put us on a stable footing for the future.

## Observations

Our two Churches, St. Andrew's and The Wisdom of God, located as they are in different parts of the parish and with different orientation of style and building character, often provoked consideration separately in the responses we received. This is both an opportunity and also a challenge. The two churches require and deserve a different approach to growth and thus this report will refer to the differences of the two churches frequently.



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However, it is also important to reflect on the similarities. Fellowship, friendliness and music were common themes upon which the values of the parish can be built, and further work is necessary perhaps to articulate our core values as a parish as unifying principles for our people and community.

To return briefly to the differences before reporting on the detail of the findings, the diversity presented by our two churches will, it is hoped, create greater reach within the respective areas of Kingswood and opportunities for a broader expression of worship and fellowship.

## What do we like?


There was a great deal that people liked about both churches, and clearly responses divided amongst those who worship at one or other church more frequently. Various themes emerged that are helpful in categorising comments.

## Buildings, location and outside space

Many commented on the beautiful building of the Wisdom of God; its distinctive design /shape, content, and history which make it a treasure in the community. Furthermore, it is surrounded by a large and flexible green space, and beyond it is embedded in a residential area, with the church hall virtually opposite. Furthermore, its rather special, interior space, with moveable chairs, lends itself to more flexible usage and worship style.

Similarly, people talked about the attractive perspective of St. Andrew's with its churchyard, garden and grounds. A more conventional church inside but with charm, it has appeal for many 'St. Andrew's is my spiritual home'. It has its lovely features.

The peaceful atmosphere, the stain glass windows, the spire were mentioned with affection, demonstrating the part a building can (and should) play in our sense of belonging and comfort derived from church membership.



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## **Fellowship and Friendship**

Repeatedly people cited 'the fellowship of the congregation', the 'friendly, welcoming' nature of the churches. One person described the 'intimacy and warmth of the congregation'. This observation extends into appreciation of coffee morning/monthly coffee circle and the offering and sharing of refreshments generally; another expression of fellowship and belonging that sustains our congregation and

provides the opportunity to welcome newcomers.

## **Music/Choir**

'The superb choir' and music generally featured high on the list of likes, and provide the basis for comments offered later about using music to extend our reach, differentiate our two church offerings, both inside services and more generally for the communities they serve.



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## **Children**

Wisdom Stories was singled out for special praise as an example of community involvement. More generally the relaxed attitude to children at Wisdom of God, the 'contribution of children to the service is a real pleasure'. Also several commented on how they liked the role and contribution of the uniformed groups at Wisdom of God.

## Spiritual Consideration

Easter Sunday services this year were commented on by a number of people as a model for stimulating attendance. Others liked the new service booklets. Some gave special appreciation for 8.00am service/BCP service. Clearly, with a parish as diverse in character as ours, we will have those who like a range of different styles, and this we should note.

### What would we like to see more of?

There was a wish to create more links between the two churches, both through worship and through social events; joint services; music concerts.

On the theme of music there were a lot of comments about the nature of hymns and the need to have 'an uplifting final hymn', more lively hymns, 'more modern hymns'. This was both for the pleasure of an uplifting approach but also to be more positive for younger people and especially for children as they re-join the main body of the church. We need 'more vibrant music' as one person put it. Choral evensong was suggested, perhaps with a visiting choir.

There was some appetite to both elevate the style of worship (churchmanship) at St. Andrew's (incense at some services/singing of psalms) and for seeking further informality at Wisdom of God on occasions to encourage accessibility. Perhaps a 4pm service on some Sundays.

However, the questionnaire provoked responses mainly around the opportunities afforded by the two very different churches, implicitly recognising their different buildings, location and community links.

The Wisdom of God was identified as offering 'more opportunity for more flexible worship', and for other activities per se. It has the village hall, it is in a community with young families, schools etc. Time and again people referred to its opportunity to do more in, and for, the community. As previously mentioned the uniformed groups are welcomed as an important dimension of this church and a building block for growth. Wisdom Stories with their links to mums and small

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children are viewed similarly as a vehicle for growth. Along the same vein, there was a wish to see more baptisms at Wisdom of God and more sustained contact with families, schools and St. Bede's where appropriate.

The Wisdom of God needs some infrastructure improvements to facilitate this; A sink for washing up; Toilet; better heating; a hand rail at the main door. However, the opportunity to offer different/ slightly less formal services which could be more inclusive to the community would be possible because the altar is moveable (to a middle position) and the chairs likewise. Services could be themed around praise, reflection, topical events. There could be events for families/younger people.

St. Andrew's also had its fair share of recommended changes. People would like to see it open more often for private prayer and reflection; a prayer/candle lighting opportunity. The footpath at the rear leads to the church ... Equally the church would benefit from an open door so that people can see in. There was interest in using the flagpole to signal/celebrate events, and a desire to introduce a patronal day celebration for St. Andrew. Again implicitly these suggestions recognise that St. Andrew's is somewhat remotely located away from its community and faces in a different direction. Hence, the suggestions of flags and the like may come from the need to get the church noticed in its community.

There are choices to be made because we cannot do everything and what we do choose to do, we cannot do all at once.



Other suggestions included;

- A prayer list policy
- Representing a Christian response to wider events/places e.g. a Bible to Africa.
- A fund raising campaign to encourage people to pull together for something (especially Wisdom of God)
- Reinvigorate 'Friends of Parish of Kingswood'
- A Remembrance Service for whole community (with hospitality)
- Lay involvement in prayer.
- Generate a list of people who can offer lifts
- Ask for feedback after different styled services.
- Clear, relevant and tidy noticeboards.

We are enormously grateful to all those who give of their time to the church, now and in the past. To bring new plans to fruition we will need people to help, according to their talents and time.

We are blessed in having two churches to spread our message and connect to their communities. As you will have seen from this report the inherent differences in their position and style present us with a range of opportunities. The Wisdom of God is a part of the community and needs to draw people in. St. Andrew's is on the fringe of its community where we need to take the church out to the community and perhaps by linking into local groups.

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## **Next Steps**


Discuss the results of our consultation.

Agree 'quick wins' i.e. things we can do at low cost and quickly.

Agree to common core values for the parish and the vision and mission for the two churches.

Look at the key themes that come from the consultation:

- Infrastructural changes
- Music
- Spiritual development and style
- Young people/families
- Draw in strategy for Wisdom of God, reach out and connect strategy for St. Andrew's.



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