Future of St. John’s, Essington – summary from recent meeting 24th May 2017

Following a long discussion, which involved much participation by the congregation of St. John’s, the following key points were made regarding the future structure of the Parish of St. John’s and St. Mary & St. Luke in Shareshill. Points which need to be made to the Rural Dean at the meeting on Monday 12th June at 7.30pm.

Ideally, we would want a full time Minister in both Essington and Shareshill; but understand that financial pressure and a shortage of ordained ministers mean this is highly unlikely.

Key points –

* Current position has not worked satisfactorily – geographically the Parishes are not located near enough and are separated by main roads and a motorway. The Parishes have not integrated well and in most ways still operate as separate Parishes.
* Parish of Essington is big enough and active enough to warrant a greater number of ministry hours in its own right. The village is sprawling in itself and additional housing developments in the centre and in Broad Lane now exist. In addition the Parish also encompasses Sneyd Lane, Newtown and Westcroft. Demands are high for spiritual and pastoral care and enhance needs exist with Care Homes and Sheltered Housing in the village.
* St. John’s Parish would want to see a significant increase in the number of hours for a minister that is resident in the present vicarage.
* We are an active Parish – in addition to the provision of our Sunday services we promote and provide a weekly Messy Tots, Messy Church, Forget-me-Not Group, Team clean group, Coffee mornings, Parish Breakfasts, G Band, COSTA service, Patronage Scheme, Lay Readers, an active Social Committee organising monthly events which allow for the congregation not only to socialise but to bond as a group and encourage the congregation to grow. Many social events rely on the combined space that the Church and Vicarage grounds provide.
* It is important that recent initiatives are maintained – G Band with Sunday at 6, Forget-me-Not Dementia Group – with ministry support.
* Current Lay Readers/Ministry Support is very effective but all are approaching retirement age so how would we maintain current level of services without additional clergy hours?
* The Church is open every day, this was looked upon favourably by the Diocese in the recent Going for Growth return. But this would not be as manageable if the Vicar did not reside in the vicarage.
* The security and safety of the Church relies on the presence of a resident Vicar.
* The Vicarage is the centre of the village and is easily accessible to all – it gives parishioners a degree of privacy if they are need.
* The WEB is currently due to finish in the next few months where our offer to the community will be much greater and we are optimistic in the outreach work that this will engender. A new church office is part of the new annexe. Full benefit of this building will be achieved by having someone permanently on site.
* The Parish Profile is very positive – the current ministry team, led by Rev Wendy, are excellent and links with other groups in the Parish are well established – Friends of Essington, Uniformed groups, Living in Loveliness, etc. Our use of social media and our recently developed website contribute significantly to this profile.
* The Church has excellent links with the local Primary Academy which has retained its Church School status following its transition to a Converter and then a Sponsor Academy. The School has 25% church representative at all levels including Local Governing Body Level, Trust Board and Member level.

Additional Considerations –

* There is no support for a United Benefice
* What about the opportunity for a married couple to take on full-time ministry of St.John’s as a stipendiary post and Shareshill as a non-stipendiary post. (Example of it working in another diocese was given)
* In order to encourage leadership in our Church is there any other ministers that could work with us? Eg Prison Chaplain, Hospital Chaplain
* Full Parish Share has always been paid and should be given due consideration of a Full time Vicar at St.John’s. Also, St.John’s Parish Share is higher than Shareshill but we have less allocated hours than Shareshill.
* Possible move to the Wolverhampton Deanery?

N.B. It was disclosed at the start of the meeting that discussion that had taken place at a Deanery Planning Meeting in September 2012 proposed a solution (following the retirement of Sara and Wendy) that there would be a Full time Priest in Charge living in Essington who would divide their ministry 50/50 with Shareshill. In addition there would be a part-time Children and Families Worker in Featherstone 0.1

**MEETING WITH RURAL DEAN – MONDAY 12TH JUNE.**

Any comments on these notes/additional points should be made to members of the PCC prior to June 11th.