



## **St Mary's Welcome Review**

During October 2015, members of the communications team collected surveys from a sample of our congregation. We were looking for a representative cross section and hoped to glean from the respondents a true and accurate picture of where we are now. To achieve a degree of consistency we formulated a questionnaire in the hope that people would be encouraged to expand a conversation and provide substance for future actions and policies. These are the summarised responses we received:

### ***How long have you been coming to St Mary's?***

Answers ranged between less than a year to over 70 years including one person who was born in Long Newton and now lives in Norfolk but tries to come to St Mary's at least once a year.

### ***What made you first come to St Mary's?***

Overwhelmingly the respondents were "invited" along. Sometimes by parents, others by friends and family and one directly by God's calling but only two said they just decided to come. So this is our first big message – **If we want to grow our congregation here, we have to invite people along.**

### ***How welcoming was your initial experience, did anything good or bad particularly stand out?***

The overwhelming majority of those who can remember that far back feel that they have been made extremely welcome here, even having fond memories of coming as a child. One determined soul found it cold and comfortless but that was at a time when their arrival brought the number up to six and have since delighted in the changes that have taken place. The good experiences all seem to revolve around friendliness, cake, socialising, great atmosphere, cake, offering prayer in the chapel after service, feeling at home and comfortable and more cake. A further great experience was the first prayer morning we ran at St Mary's. Another message – **our welcome extends far beyond greeting people at the door and is exhibited through our lives in the church and outside.**

### ***Do you feel more welcome now and if so, why?***

All respondents feel very welcome now and value the effort being made to be welcoming and loving. There is a genuine interest in people's wellbeing and no unwritten rules to fall foul of. The warm greeting at the door and the concern to be put at ease was appreciated.

***Do you feel part of the congregation or an added extra? Can you explain how you feel about this?***

To a man (and woman) they all felt part of the congregation; even our Norwich visitor still feels very much at home here with us. The terms accepted, valued and loving kept cropping up as well as respondents liking the easy going atmosphere, the right to roam and sit anywhere and the format of the services all help with the mix. One person felt honoured to be part of St Mary's and another appreciated the opportunity to become involved and develop friendships.

### ***How could St Mary's improve their welcome?***

At this point our respondents seemed to be fully into the swing and really opened up into a wide range of thoughts and ideas.

Stop the gridlock at the door by encouraging people to move further into church.

We should "buddy" new attenders to help them find their way.

We must remain consistent and be friendly with everyone.

The welcoming works well but it's always worth keeping the congregation aware of the benefits of being welcoming. (you may want to read that twice)

Replace the noticeboard with a new one, preferably illuminated and angled for greater visibility.

### ***What do you feel are the strengths of St Mary's?***

Many key words used – commitment, friendliness, caring, inclusive, fellowship, unity. Some said that our welcome is a real strength whilst others also listed the sermon series, the online sermons, the variety of service leaders and preachers and that St Mary's is a caring and praying church. Some just like to sing. Underlying everything - **it's the people who make the difference.**

### ***How could St Mary's improve its Sunday services?***

Overall there is a high level of satisfaction with the type of services we run at St Mary's, the way they are run and the variety of leaders and speakers. There was an indication we should always be open minded towards change and several comments regarding children, all of which pointed towards their encouragement in the services. Suggestions were that we should have a monthly Family Service and provide a designated area where children can learn and enjoy their time in church, a specific place where they can be excited. The children should have greater opportunity to be interactive within the service through more child friendly activities and hymns.

Thanks to everyone who gave their time to conduct this survey. The results have been considered at MDT and PCC and overall there are four key messages for us all to take on board:

- **Positivity.** Our Welcome appears to be very satisfactory.
- **Children.** We want the children to be encouraged and ways need to be found for their greater involvement.
- **Inclusivity.** The refreshments served after the services seem to have a major effect by creating the environment where people can meet and get to know each other.
- **Variety.** There is universal appreciation of the range of people, styles and ideas that we encounter at St Mary's and feel so much richer for it.

To all the "Welcomers", leaders and preachers this is a big thank you from everyone at St Mary's.