

Local Mission Swap Shop



A very practical idea for local rural churches to share experience & ideas in an annual one-off centralised event, and learn together about all sorts of local examples of mission and community engagement. Great for lay people, PCCs and even ministers!

The idea for the Swap Shop had come from a discussion that had taken place in the Ludlow Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee about rural mission. How do we, as Church, engage with our rural communities in a meaningful way?

On reflection we decided that we all approached this task in different ways and that within the deanery there was a wealth of experience and expertise. It was then that we agreed to put on an event that would enable every parish of the deanery to come together to celebrate what they do in their context and to share their good practice with the rest of the deanery. The aim of the Swap Shop was to affirm parishes in all that they do and to encourage them to see what other parishes were doing and to see if there could be mutual learning.



Early on it was necessary to determine who the Swap Shop was going to be for. Who did we want to invite and get involved? Hereford Diocese has a clear strategy for promoting Mission Action Planning and wants to enable PCCs to access this process so that they can, along with the whole church community and the wider community, think about what their hopes are for the future, and how their priorities can best reflect God's priorities. So early on it was agreed that the Swap Shop would primarily be for PCC members, with the idea that they could not only come along and share what they do but could learn from the experiences of other PCCs and parishes, which would hopefully

feed into their own Mission Action Plan. The Swap Shop would also provide an opportunity for parishes to evaluate how their activity corresponded with the Marks of Mission.

Invitations were sent out and we were really encouraged that we had the promise of twenty five stands, the majority of them from PCCs who simply wanted to share who they were and what they were doing in their communities. We were also delighted that the Diocesan Resources Library said they would come along too, so that parishes could see what resources were available to help them make their ideas a reality.

Workshops & learning together

The planning group also decided that the Swap Shop would provide a good opportunity for the deanery to learn together. We organised three workshops which looked at different examples of mission which we hoped would encourage parishes. In these workshops:



- Church Army Officer Kathleen Boyland explored the talents that abound in our parishes
- Esther Gregory, the Diocesan Young People's Officer, looked at mission and young people
- Bishop Alistair shared his experience of beating the bounds

On the day, all these workshops had a good take up and people fed back that they had been really worthwhile.

What was on offer?

So on 15 September Culmington Village Hall was buzzing with activity and conversation. Many of the PCCs from the deanery had gone to a lot of trouble to be involved and there was a real sense of pride in what they were offering to the rest of the deanery. Amongst all the laptops, display boards of every size, photos & hands-on resources, what was on offer?

- A **Traidcraft** stall
- A display from **A Rocha**
- 'Faith in the Pub'
- Coffee mornings in various styles, including fresh bacon rolls from Tenbury (see below)
- Welcome packs
- Adult education
- **Mothers' Union**
- A parents' and toddlers' group
- The local youth club 'Off the Street'
- A link with Maramba, Tanzania
- Links with campers from Tranmere, the Wirral and Pallion
- Family services
- **Godly Play**
- Music & prayer
- Links with HM Prison Shrewsbury that produces cards & calendars
- **Caring for God's Acre**

The Hereford Diocesan Lay Development Officer, Revd Caroline Pascoe, who supported this project right from the start, also brought along a Marks for Mission quiz, with prizes!

A case study: Drop-in coffee morning

As you can see there were many examples of mission displayed and there is much that can be said about all of them. One that is particularly worth mentioning, since it filled Culmington Village Hall with the smell of bacon, is the Tenbury Coffee Morning. This happens every Tuesday – market day in Tenbury – at St Mary's



Church, and is a drop-in coffee morning from 10.00-12.00. Coffee and biscuits are free and a small charge is made for a bacon roll. Every Tuesday there are forty or so people who simply drop in. Around the town folk have heard about the bacon rolls and come along and find themselves talking to all sorts of people. Two of the residential care homes regularly bring some of their residents for their morning coffee. For residents of Tenbury and from further afield, the coffee morning is a place of sociability, care, listening and friendship.

The Swap Shop achieved what it meant to do in that it brought the deanery together to celebrate all that we do and all that we are. It also encouraged and supported the people and parishes of the deanery in working together to share God's Kingdom with all. Many of those who came to the Swap Shop left with notebooks and heads full of ideas that they wanted to try out in their parishes. There was definitely a buzz about mission that morning and we hope that this will continue in the parishes of the deanery.

Revd Claire Lording

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