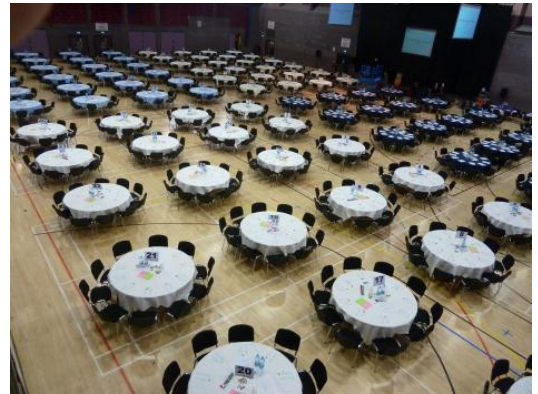


Time to Talk – The First Results

This report presents the immediate results of the *Time to Talk* Consultation held at the Brentwood Centre on Saturday 21 January 2012. The Consultation focused on questions relating to two documents: *Transforming Presence* and *Developing a new Ministry Strategy for the Parishes and Deaneries in the Diocese of Chelmsford*. These are available with videos of the event and all the templates used on the day at: www.transformingpresence.org.uk. This means that a similar process can be re-run in smaller, local groups. Members of the planning group, and especially the Area Parish Development Advisers, will be pleased to offer assistance to deaneries in their follow-up work.

Some statistics

952 participants registered in advance (270 clergy, 676 lay people and 6 guests), 124 didn't turn up on the day but another 30 arrived without booking! Every deanery was represented. We had 50 helpers, including our bishops and archdeacons, making a total of 908 people present on the day. We used 99 tables, 198 bottles of water, 15Kg of sweets and 5000 pipe-cleaners! The table-groups produced 768 pages of feedback all of which have been read and analysed by the Reference Group. The bookstall sold £1400 of books.



The Process

The Consultation focussed on six activities involving discussion around tables of up to 10, each with a mix of clergy and lay people. No deanery had more than one representative at a table. Our specially invited guests, diocesan officers, young people, ordinands, cathedral members and head-teachers were evenly distributed. The table-groups facilitated their own discussion and provided feedback on pre-prepared templates. As well as the shared discussions, individuals recorded their hopes and concerns at the start of the day and their personal action and follow-up priorities at the end.

The first group activity was a Bible-reflection, without feedback, on Romans 12.1-6.

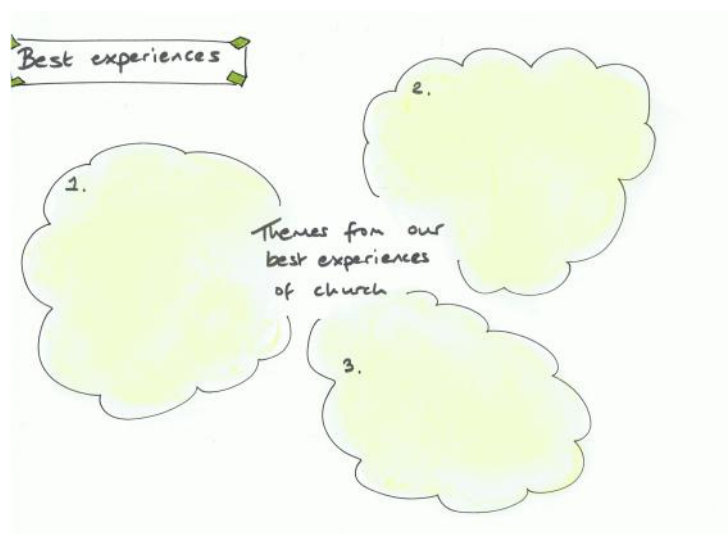
The following sections report the results of each of the main table discussions:

- A. What are our best experiences of church?
- B. In response to *Transforming Presence*, what inspired and challenged us?
- C. What are the essential ingredients of church?
- D. Imagining the future - What ministry will we need?
- E. How will we get there? What should we keep doing, start, or stop? What help will we need?



If you were at the Brentwood Centre, we hope you will be able to see how your table's contribution has been included (even if we have not used the specific words or headlines you produced) and that there will be more ideas here to encourage your on-going thinking and action in response to *Transforming Presence*.

A. What are our best experiences of church?



If we want church at its best, we'll set God's people free to discover and use the gifts he has given them. This is one key conclusion to be drawn from participants' responses. We'll also ensure that churches grow through evangelism, encounter God in worship, are places of mutual support, offer a warm welcome and serve their communities.

These are the major themes in the responses from each table-group. The bar chart shows the relative level of responses in graphical form.

1. Discovering our gifts and seeing others develop theirs (48 responses)

20 responses spoke of discovering participants' own gifts: "finding what ministry God wanted each of us to do"; "being recognised by a priest as gifted"; "being allowed to experiment as I found God's call for me".

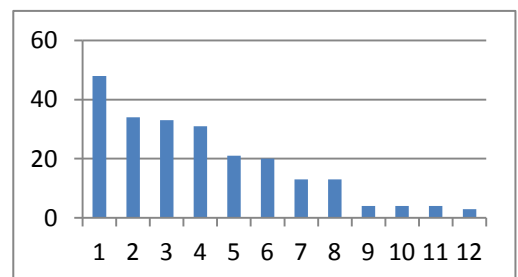
28 responses spoke of seeing others discover and develop their gifts: "seeing people grow in confidence to be ministers"; "seeing the laity get involved"; "seeing the congregation grow in every-member ministry"; "when people stop being passive"; "seeing people blossom in new roles". Vacancies were fondly remembered as times for God's people to grow in ministry.

2. Experiencing evangelism/church growth (34)

"events that bring people in"; "people coming to faith"; "effective witnessing"; "unexpected, God-led encounters with those who need God's message". The word "gentle" was frequently used to qualify the word "evangelism", and "times when our church building was full" were often recalled with fondness.

3. Experiencing God in worship (33)

"joy"; "the presence of God in stillness"; "feeling God's power in Spirit-anointed worship"; "experiencing the Spirit at communion"; "being lifted up by the Spirit". A number of the responses made the point that at these times we are often "surprised by joy".



4. A supportive community (31)

"friendship"; "not a place of strife"; "a body, not a club"; "support from brothers and sisters in adversity"; "fellowship: a collision of people"; "inclusive community". There was a strong emphasis on mutual support (especially in tough times) and on unity to achieve a common goal.

5. Receiving a good initial welcome to a church (21)

“finding a welcoming environment”; “knowing that we can belong”; “feeling immediately at home”

6. Serving the community (20)

“finding ways to meet practical needs”; “social gospel”; “meeting the needs of those outside the church, not just those inside”

These six themes accounted for two-thirds of the responses. However, the following themes also featured in more than one response:

7. Risking a new venture/major change (13)

“stepping out in faith”, “starting a fresh expression”, “risking doing cafe church”.

8. All-age worship experiences (13)

“older people reassuring the younger”; “the young people challenging the church”; “children coming in to join us at worship”

9. Understanding something new about God/the Bible (4)

10. Prayer (4)

11. A sense of achievement at reaching a goal (4)

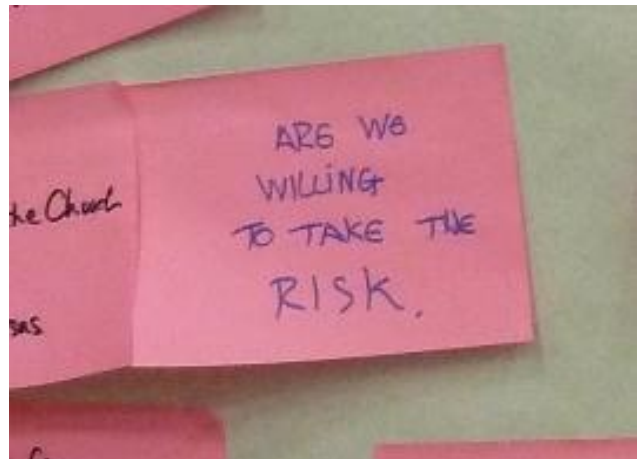
12. Experiencing church at its best within the home/small group (3)

B. Reactions to Transforming Presence

Responses were recorded using sticky Post It notes. Each table could record three things that inspired them and one that challenged them.

What inspired us?

Well, actually, quite a lot. The four themes from *Transforming Presence* featured many times, particularly evangelism and ministry. There were also other clusters of comments such as prayer and being inspired by the prospect of change. The following are the main clusters, with a few examples to illustrate:

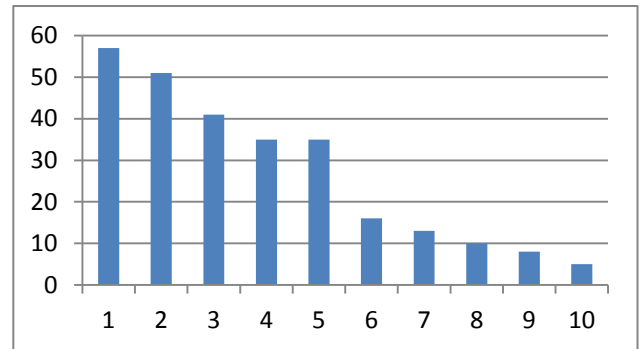


I. Evangelism (57)

- “God is the evangelist”
- “evangelism and mission will be our priority mindset in all churches”
- “equipping and releasing God’s people for the work God wants them to do”
- “the aim to have a parish evangelist”
- “it should be easy and natural to talk about Jesus”

2. Living distinctively (51)

- “starts with our relationship with God”
- “encouragement to develop biblical literacy”
- “the reminder to be a distinctive presence – inspired not burdened”
- “daring to be different”
- “personal discipleship”
- “idea of a rule of life”
- “church schools to be different”



3. Re-imagining ministry (41)

- “individuals fulfilling their role in the body”
- “every member ministry”
- “lay ministry encouraged”
- “not father knows best but everyone using their gifts”
- “working together with common purpose”
- “exciting opportunity, 47% of clergy will retire within 10 years”

4. Empowerment through this event and Leadership from Bishop Stephen (35)

- “talking together”
- “whole diocese looking at the big picture”
- “ideas for today have come from the top and our ideas are now coming from the bottom up, but we are looking a/cross”
- “serious attempt to create a process and engage people”
- “leadership from Bishop Stephen” and several similar comments

5. Change and transformation (35)

- “the vision of a changed church”
- “this suggests that everyone could and should be inspired to open their minds to change”
- “the fact that there seems to be a change process”
- “that finally the problems have been articulated and opened for discussion and long term planning”

6. Focus on Prayer (16)

7. Long term vision / planning (13)

8. The document itself (10)

9. Accountability (8)

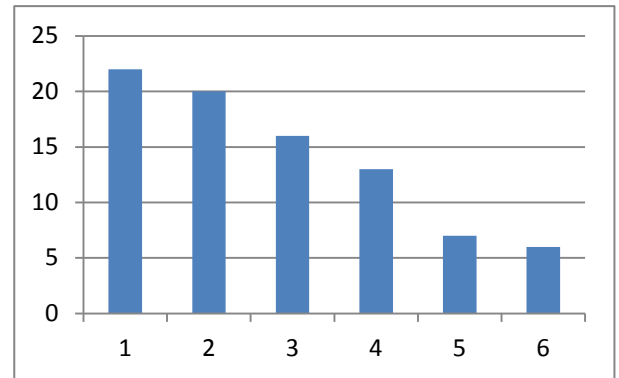
- “increasing accountability throughout the church, not just the clergy”
- “to God and one another”
- “first time I’ve seen the diocese thinking about accountability”

10. Acknowledging diversity (5)

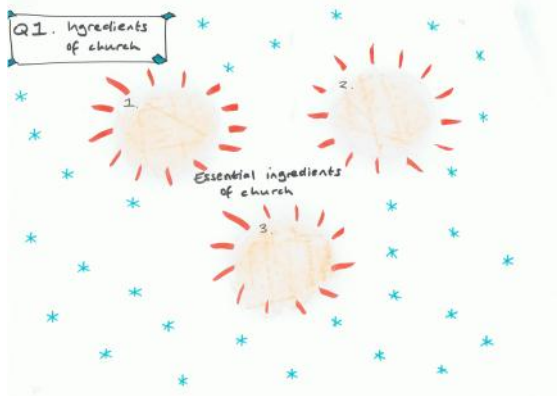
What challenged us?

Most responses were not about **what** the document said, but **how** it was to be delivered:

1. **Responding personally, particularly the call to evangelise (22)**
 - “moving from church as a hobby to a way of life relevant to the wider community”
 - “to personally take the first step”
 - “it should be as easy and natural to talk about Jesus as to talk about football or Eastenders”
2. **Delivering Transforming Presence (20)**
 - “making it happen”
 - “momentum from today”
3. **Re-imagining ministry specifically (16)**
 - “future of ministry and the need to change”
 - “encouraging individuals’ ministry”
 - “lay ministry encouraged in the document but there is a great deal of constraint by bishops and incumbents”
 - “clergy letting go – congregation taking up the challenge”
4. **Resources and structures (13)**
 - “managing limited resources: money, people, skills, buildings”
 - “hidebound by the parish structure as it is and the way this is currently financed”
 - “as a church we don’t like change...”
5. **Maintaining diversity (7)**
 - “in making ourselves accountable, are we in danger of losing our diversity”
 - “preserving the best of the present while looking to the future”
6. **Sharing the messages in Transforming Presence (6)**
 - “translating and presenting the content of this document in our parishes”
 - “getting deanery and parish visions in line ... so we all work together”
 - “getting others on board”
7. **Others**
 - Quality and effectiveness of local leadership
 - Changing public perceptions
 - Defining the problem
 - Church buildings not setting the agenda
 - Being radical enough



C. The Essential Ingredients of Church



Summary

- By far and away the single most popular word that table-groups used was worship (63)
- This is followed by fellowship or community (43)
- The third most mentioned concept is mission (30)
- Other words with significant support include love (26), evangelism (22), relationship with God (21), discipleship (20) and service (11)

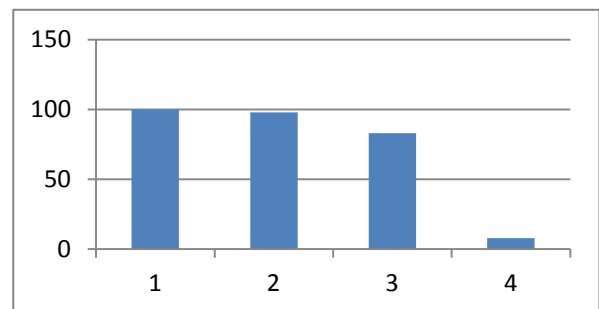
When all the words used in the three 'clouds' are combined, the following major groupings emerge:

1. Being the Body of Christ (100)

- Fellowship/Community/Relations within the faith community/In/People centred/relating with others as a group/belonging/Acts 2.42/Jesus' people/shared life (43)
- People/love each other/love/relationships/interaction/pastoral care (26)
- Discipling/learning together/learn to grow/equipping ourselves to carry out God's mission/Discipleship/instruction/scripture/apprentices of Christ/nurture/Gospel (20)
- Gathering/welcome (inclusive)/place to belong/unity (6)
- Direction/growth/place to grow (4)
- Venue (not always a building) (1)

2. Encountering God (98)

- Worshipping God/Worship/Up/being in God's presence/ encountering God/Acts 2.42-47/prayer/spirit filled through prayer/sacraments (63)
- God/relationship with God/God focussed/Jesus centred/Christ centred/distinctive and Christ-like/alive to God/presence of God/Grace (21)
- Belief/faith (6)
- Passion/place to be transformed/inspiration/listening to the Spirit/Spirit filled (8)



3. Engaged in Mission (83)

- Mission/Christ centred/Jesus/relating to the world/Jesus at the centre/outward/others/Jesus' purpose (30)
- Evangelism/missional/outreach/Out/witness/Good News/proclamation (22)
- Service/service to others/Social justice/demonstrating the love of Christ/sacramental service (12)
- Distinctive/alive, growing, changing, sharing/inclusive/outward looking and accessible/making a difference to the world/presence and engagement (7)
- Hope/mirror the Kingdom/love the world/sign of Kingdom (8)
- Generosity/stewardship/sharing (3)
- Relationship with the world (1)

4. Other (8)

- Relevance/culturally relevant (3)
- Leadership, accountability, space, fruit and resources (1 each)

Notes

- It is not always clear what some responses mean. So, for instance, 'mission' is almost interchangeable with 'evangelism' for some people, but means far more than that to others.
- Not every table had something that fitted into each of these three main categories; and where they didn't it was mostly the third category that missed out. This suggests we have a significant number of churches that are inward looking.
- Some tables tried to combine more than one idea in a single box (e.g. "serving the community and evangelising") Where this happened we have taken the first idea as paramount, and expect this evened out over the full sample.
- The "up, in, out" theme was repeated several times; as was "faith, hope, love" although often with different emphases.

Some potentially Prophetic Statements to consider:

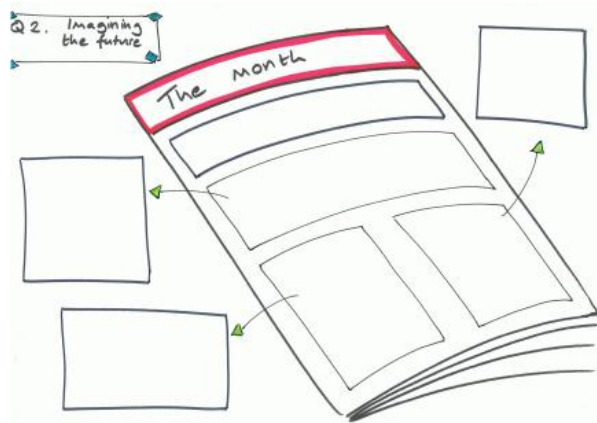
These comments written on the feedback sheets outside the three main circles stood out:

- *Get yourselves persecuted!*
- *Stand up and stand out*
- *Porous boundaries*
- *Unscheduled sacred moments*
- *The church must love itself*
- *People not building*
- *Less compromise, more confrontation*
- *Mindset of living the idea of the Kingdom of heaven on earth*

...and finally

These words featured regularly but never made it to the centre circles: *fun, joy, food, laughter* and *giving*.

D. Imagining the future



Notable headlines included:

The difference was everyone pulled together
15th Deanery admin co-op now up and running

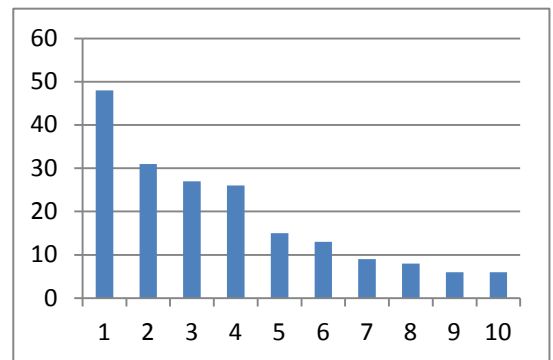
Ten more martyrs

Churches transformed into showroom for God's kingdom

Million feet washed: because you walked with us, we want to walk with God.

The 'top ten' headlines from the table responses refer to:

1. **Numerical growth** - new churches/overflowing churches/big numbers baptized/confirmed "Lost sheep found!"(48)
2. **Community transformation/social change** e.g. crime rate down; divorce down; Tesco's tithe profits (31)
3. **Lay ministry** growing / "we all wear collars now"/ "Lost Vicar – found team"/ "Dog collars ditched in the midst of revolution"(27)
4. **Doing church differently** (26) with two major subcategories: Church getting out of building into pub, shops etc (13) and churches accessible 7 days a week; "church without walls" (13)
5. **Use of new technology/social media** (15)
6. **Young leaders** (10) plus 3 references to children ministering (13)
7. **Funding** – parish share becoming unnecessary; excess funds available for mission (9)
8. **Church groups serving the community/Big Society** (8)
9. **Health/healing** (6)
10. **Increase in vocations** (6)



Other popular headlines included:

- 11 mentions of the Olympics, especially the pool for baptisms!
- 11 references to women bishops
- 9 references to churches outdoing shopping centres on Sundays
- The word 'revival' appeared on 7 sheets
- 5 headlines mention 'Dawkins converted' or similar!

The responses to this question nearly all focus on the ministry of the whole Church, and frequently on what could be described as 'outcomes'. There are references to 'lay ministry' and evangelists are sometimes specifically mentioned but the terms 'Reader' and 'pastoral assistant' did not appear anywhere. There were only two references to inter-faith relationships.

E. How will we get there?

Q3. How will we get there?

START doing

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

KEEP doing

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Additional resources or help needed

STOP doing

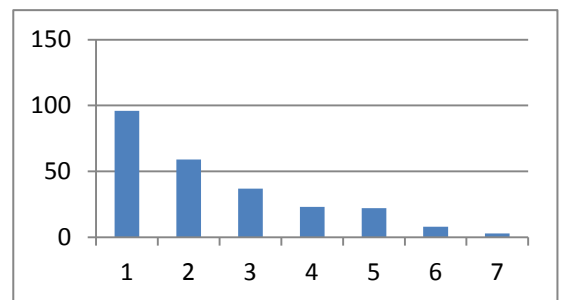
Summary

- Lay people appear willing, and many know what they need to do, both in terms of ministry within the church and mission outside of it, but feel under-resourced to do it and want more training.
- People know they need to engage with the wider community in both mission and evangelism, but lack confidence or skills to do it.
- Public worship is highly valued.

There were a lot of responses to all four sections of this question, with many tables writing more than the anticipated number of comments in each section - it obviously sparked a lot of debate on each table!

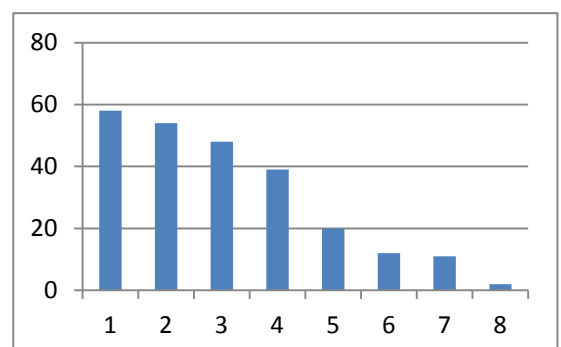
Start doing . . .

1. The greatest need expressed is for empowering of the laity in both faith and ministry; in fact it is almost a cry for help (96)
2. The next was a wish to engage with the wider community in both social action and evangelism, and the help needed to do this (59)
3. There was a desire for deeper spirituality which was expressed in a number of ways (37)
4. Better communication in and between churches (23),
5. Churches working together (22)
6. Better leadership (8)
7. Work with youth (3)



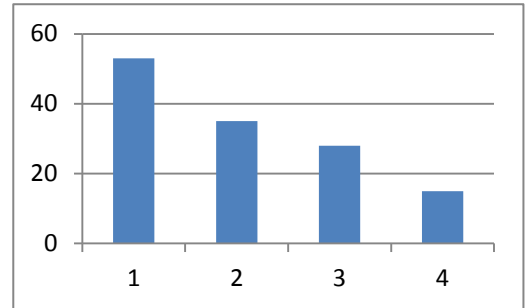
Keep doing . . .

1. Meeting to worship together (58)
2. Engaging with the community (54)
3. Praying (48)
4. Nurture and training (39) of which local (28), and Diocesan (11)
5. Youth & children's work (20)
6. Maintaining a presence in every community (12) of which 6 related to the building
7. Pastoral care (11)
8. Ecumenical work (2)



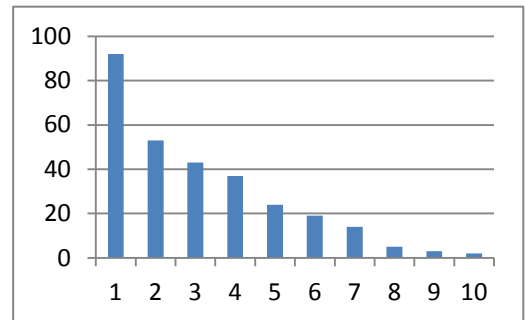
Stop doing . . . including ‘Stop being . . .’, or even just ‘Stop’

1. Disunity, including bickering and moaning, and being inward looking (53)
2. Inefficient use of staff and resources (35)
3. Opposition to change (28)
4. Being embarrassed by Church and Gospel (15)



Additional resources or help needed

1. Training and Support (92) of which local training (10), specifically lay training (18), specifically clergy training (6), On-line resources (3), with specific training requested for youth leaders, and young leaders, parish administration and the use of new technology.
2. Pooling resources, support and collaboration (53), of which resource sharing (15), specifically deanery based sharing (6), and mentoring (4).
3. Leadership & roles (43) of which supportive leadership (e.g. accredited ministers) to oversee, empower and encourage (23), visionary leadership (7), and improvement in communication and bureaucracy (13).
4. Extra staff or otherwise gifted members of the congregation (37), specifically administrators (4), youth and children workers (7), and leaders (7).
5. Change in attitude of church members (24)
6. IT support (19)
7. Money (12) and time (2)
8. Building development (5)
9. Two tables considered that they had what they needed
10. Three wanted more dissemination through the topics discussed, with feedback in due time on the impact they had had on the parishes



Feedback from our Guests

While the diocesan participants discussed the last topic, our ecumenical, international and national church guests met together. They offered both appreciation for being invited and admiration for the day's process. Their feedback included the following comments:

1. The section of the *Transforming Presence* paper on accountability was welcomed.
2. One guest observed the lay energy for theological reflection and discussion, and also that their primary focus was not on concerns regarding reducing clergy numbers.
3. Were clergy being expected to transform communities (missioners) or transform churches (chaplains), and what was the expectation of the local church community?
4. Need for a change of culture as well as a change of heart as some priests become more Episcopal and others more diaconal.
5. Is there any particular training provision for those who will be called to exercise a wider, "Episcopal", ministry e.g. Team Rectors? How do we encourage clergy to see oversight and strategic development as part of the priestly vocation?
6. In the light of the success of the Chelmsford-Karlstad Clergy Leadership Programme, could we have a one off training event for ministers of different denominations to enable similar sharing within Essex and East London? Could we co-ordinate in-service training for clergy more effectively? Might some leadership training to be done "with the world", with questions of leadership being discuss with Christian leaders in other sectors e.g. Head teachers, Doctors, Business?
7. The questions were good, and we recognise that the purpose of the gathering is to bring together Anglican Christians. What, however, would an ecumenical response be to those questions? Could the model be rolled out to groupings of Churches Together in towns, such that the local response is not simply an Anglican one? Or could Deaneries be encouraged to invite ecumenical observers?
8. Deployment questions should be considered in partnership with other denominations.
9. Church Leaders are clearly giving permission to change and experiment but is there also permission to fail?

Conclusion

This report has been compiled by the *Time to Talk* Planning and Reference group. We have deliberately avoided offering any interpretation of these results but it is already clear that the responses to Question 'C' begin to address the issue of Serving with Accountability and those to Questions 'D' and 'E' will help in developing our ministry strategy. Further reflection, interpretation and appropriate consultation will be needed as we take forward the diocesan vision and strategy set out in *Transforming Presence*.

Revd Canon Dr Roger Matthews (Chair), John Ball, Revd Andy Griffiths, Revd Susan Iskander, Mary Kersys, Ralph Meloy, Revd Vernon Ross, Revd Jenny Tomlinson, and Revd Canon Martin Wood

26 January 2012