

***LOVING AND
ENABLING THE
'OVERLOOKED':***

***REPORT OF THE
TRADITIONAL
EUCCHARISTIC
SERVICE
REVIEW GROUP***

Epiphany 2020

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Preface

This report represents the almost embarrassingly unambiguous and unanimous mind of the Traditional Eucharistic Service Review Group (hereafter TESRG)! That unity is not the product of some miraculous pre-programming of seven normally independent people to think in exactly the same way! Far from it. It is rather the product of about twenty-three hours of meeting together:

- reflecting on biblical guidance
- praying
- listening to each other
- considering the extended interviews we had as a group with key figures in BPC.

It is expressed in a report that has gone through not a few versions – each of them read and commented on by all TESRG members - before reaching this final state. As we commenced our work we focused on a number of problems - some of them fairly intractable. By our later meetings we were convinced that at bottom the issue was, as our title suggest, 'Loving and Enabling the "Overlooked"'¹ (LEO for short). Get that right and the intractable problems become much more tractable. 'Loving' focuses on a Spirit-filled determination to demonstrate practical love to those who feel 'overlooked'. 'Enabling' focuses on releasing the rich potential of the Traditional Eucharistic Service (hereafter TES) to have a very significant discipling and evangelising role within BPC. That is why Recommendations 1 and 2 are the key to everything else.

Our prayer therefore is that LEO may enable leaders to *focus in the first instance on the reality of the need for loving and enabling TES*. That in time will create a responsive climate. It will immediately also create a positive mind-set for leaders from which to reflect on the range of problems and suggested solutions which we have written about.

Our prayer is finally that, though occasional parts of the reviewing and reflecting of LEO may cause pain or puzzlement (as honest reviewing and reflecting on any group of imperfect people by equally imperfect people is almost bound to cause), this will be far outweighed by the steps it enables towards the rich unity of love within diversity which is our calling. If and as that happens we believe that there can be very significant growth of the Lord's kingdom through TES here in Buckingham and way beyond.

'So the word of God spread.' (Acts 6: 7, NIV).

¹ See 1.2 below for the way the infant church in Jerusalem faced the reality that rapid growth led to some being 'overlooked'. See paras 1.2, 2.1-2.4, 5.1, 6.2a, 7.1, 8.1, 10.1 for the expression of this feeling in the TES sometimes in very strong language

Executive Summary²

1. TESRG has an enormous appreciation of what God is doing at BPC through the present leadership, PCC, lay staff and myriads of volunteers (see para 2.1 and 2.3). If the TES has suffered as a result of this growth it is an extremely common reality – very evident in the NT - that rapid expansion brings problems (see para 1.2).
2. We conclude that TES has been 'overlooked' (see paras 1.2, 2.1 – 2.4 & 9.1) and feels that it is regarded as second-class (see paras 2.1 & 2.2). Rather than beating itself or the TES up BPC needs to review the problems; reflect on them; identify solutions and act (see para 1.2).
3. Accepting that hurt has been caused BPC needs in particular to find ways of rediscovering and encouraging the rich and diverse tradition in which the TES stands and to ensuring that it is a loved and valued part at the heart of BPC.³ There needs to be a culture change around how diversity of worship styles are viewed so that traditional and contemporary worshippers both know themselves to be different but greatly valued and loved as members of the same family (see paras 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4 and 4.3).
4. The TES is an important instrument for evangelism and discipling not only to the growing number of over 55s in the community but to those moving to Buckingham who are more at home in a more liturgical setting. A growth strategy is an urgent requirement (see paras 3.3 - 3.6).
5. Most TES attenders are convinced of the need for enthusiasm, vision and creativity within a liturgical framework if the TES is to reverse its gentle decline and grow. A small creative team is proposed to take ownership of the service, for its planning, implementation and advertising (see paras 4.2 and 8.2).
6. Constancy of leadership (including pastoral leadership) at the TES is needed if the gentle creativity, discipling and pastoral care is going to happen. It is also an important instrument for outreach and growth (see paras 4.2, 5.1).
7. The prospect of expanding and developing the present congregation, including strengthening the choir, means expanding the provision for

² Our hope is that this Summary will be read *alongside, rather than instead of*, the main text! Otherwise the nuances of what we have to say will be missed and that would be to sell TES and BPC short..

³ And that led to our title 'Loving and Enabling the "Overlooked"' (LEO for short)

children. This is ideally to be achieved by meeting the need from within the TES with guidance from staff (see paras 5.2 and 9.2).

8. The music for worship at the TES is restricted by out of date hymn/song books and this will need to be addressed. There is a great willingness to explore:
 - a wider choice of music
 - the use of instrumentalists to enhance the worship
 - a much closer working relationship between the Organist and the Worship Leader than has been the case heretofore
 - the improvement of sound both to and from the choir and platform area (see para 6.2e)

9. The time of TES is one cause of the unhappiness for the TES congregants. It needs to be re-explored with a concern to find what is best for the whole church (see para 7.2). Our preference, bearing in mind both the needs of TES and our understanding of what works best for families in many other churches, would be to move the family service to the afternoon. Whatever is decided needs to include consultation and very well-thought through communication (see para 7.3).

10. TES needs to be so prominent in the mind-set of BPC that the question 'should the TES be included in this communication?' is always asked when websites, appeals and other information are put together and sent out (see para 8.1). It needs also to develop a communication / advertising strategy which will be seen and heard by those most likely to be attracted by the particular tradition in which it stands (see para 8.2).

11. It is a relatively new phenomenon for BPC to have lay professional staff. Their role in relationship to lay volunteers, to the formal structures of the church (PCC, wardens etc, see paras 2.2 and 9.1 and 9.2) and to the TES congregants needs to be thought through (see para 9.1). One crucially important role is creating a culture of 'good enough' volunteering (see para 9.2).

12. We are confident that the Lord can and will give TES a critical role in the life of BPC if we are courageous enough to face the issues and to implement the sort of solutions we have made alongside no doubt others that will suggest themselves (paras 1.2 and 8.2).

1: Introduction

1.1 Back in August 2019 the Mission and Outreach Group agreed the following minute:

11am⁴ Service

Whilst not losing any focus or momentum from other services it was felt time to explore the outreach opportunity this service could offer to the older generation in the community and to those moving into the town who prefer the liturgical type of service. It was agreed that Peter Williams be asked to bring a small group together **to review, develop and grow** the service. Will asked Keith to discuss with Peter.⁵

In consequence a small group⁶ was formed and met for nine evenings. The group as a whole had an enormous breadth of experience either of the more traditional service at BPC or of similar services in other places. It was deeply, urgently and very carefully committed to its brief. Each evening began with a short reflection on biblical examples and teaching which were relevant to the 11am service and prayer. It had two whole evening conversations with Will; one whole evening with Rob and half evenings with Paul Wallace, Maurice Stanton-Saringer, Keith Croxton, Ali Burt, Matt Lambert and Max Wigley as well as more informal and individual conversations with many church members.

1.2 One of the key biblical passages we considered was from Acts 6. The infant church in Jerusalem was faced with a problem. Some of its members felt that they were being 'overlooked'⁷ as a consequence of the very rapid growth. That feeling had resonances with what we were picking up from folk in the 11am congregation. They also felt overlooked, 'left behind', 'marginalised', somewhat uncared for and 'disgruntled'.⁸ Looking back at how the apostles and early disciples dealt with the complaints they faced we noted that they did not beat themselves up for not spotting the problem earlier; nor did they become negative about the complainers; nor did they suggest that their negativity was a result of some spiritual defect within the complainers – though no doubt they could easily have found many defects! Rather they **reviewed the problem; reflected on it; identified a solution; acted on it** in their case by delegation and then got on with their immediate calling of ministering the word of God. And then we were excited to read and 'so the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith' (v 7). In other words the word of God spread both through the actions in themselves

⁴ As will be clear below the time of the service is an issue. We have used the 11am time the TOR gave us as a short-hand description of this service and certainly not to suggest that this is our favoured time

⁵ Italics and bold added

⁶ Gerry Causer, Valerie Hiron, Brian Hirst, Bob Legrove, David Squibb, Judith Wigley and Peter Williams

⁷ Hence the use of 'overlooked' in our title

⁸ Some of this evidence came from Bob Legrove, 'Consolidation of feedback received re Trial start of 11.00 service at 11.15', Oct 2019 but it comes also from many other sources.

and through the release the apostles had from the weight of this particular problem. The Church will never be free of problems but this *review, reflect, identify and act* model is, we believe, biblical and transferable. Adapting it to our similar but different contexts can lead to rich blessing and significant growth. That we pray will be the story of the TES in BPC through the next decade.

1.3 Many of the church leaders who read this report may normally attend services from a distinctively different culture. If you are in this category we pray that you will be empathetic to the reality that some matters which give rise to sharp tensions and fears for the TES congregation are rather positive joys in your congregation. And such radically alternative perspectives are normal in a growing church. When we looked at the amazing variety of worship patterns in the NT church – ranging from conservative Jewish Christians to radical Gentile Christians - we came to see that such diversity is part of the very nature of a Church that is being faithful to the Gospel.

1.4 Yes, differences may sometimes produce acute tensions. Faced by such tensions we have always to ask ourselves whether these varied emphases are fundamental and essential to the Gospel or whether they are non-essentials - more to do with expressions of culture, gender, social or religious background, personality or stages in our life journey. That's the distinction Paul made. It meant that when he faced such differences he was implacable in his opposition if he saw folk putting all their trust in one approach – in his case often circumcision – because this suggested that we needed to work to reach God rather than receiving the unearned grace that Christ offers us. When however Paul saw folk making a choice for themselves while not imposing that choice as an essential for others he went to great and self-sacrificing lengths to accommodate their preferences.⁹ That's why John Newton, the writer of that wonderful grace-centred hymn 'Amazing Grace', could praise Paul as being 'a reed in non-essentials, - an iron pillar in essentials'.¹⁰ What follows is mainly about non-essentials, albeit often very important ones, and we have every confidence that you will be wise, sympathetic and flexible reeds as you consider it.

⁹ See for example Acts 21: 17-26 and his accommodation to the local convictions of the very Jewish Jerusalem church

¹⁰ John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: To the Ends of the Earth*, IVP, Leicester 1990, (ISBN: 0 85110 962 4), 257

Key Issues

Some key issues have emerged from the nine meetings we have had:

2: The culture of BPC from a TES perspective

2.1 Every church has its own unique culture. This is made up of many things – locality, social mix, history, spiritual tradition, current vision and much else. In relation to the culture of BPC all the people we spoke at length with¹¹ were extremely appreciative of BPC:

- its biblical and credal orthodoxy combined with a willingness to change to meet the needs of an ever-changing culture
- its Rector, curates and staff and their dedication and commitment to the Lord and the leading of the Spirit
- its passion for evangelism
- its innovativeness and creativity in worship
- its biblical and relevant preaching
- its imaginative social outreach
- its deep involvement through its members in our local community
- its ability to think and act 'outside the box'.

These folk were also very appreciative of the variety of worship styles. Most of them felt equally at home in contemporary and traditional worship. They shared how they had been blessed by the emphasis on the Holy Spirit in contemporary services and in various big Christian events they had attended (Focus, Spring Harvest, HTB etc). But equally they shared how they had been blessed by the more liturgical traditional worship at BPC and in other churches they had attended. While all this was very positive, they also articulated what amounted, as we reflected on it, to a recurring negative in the same area. The over-arching recurring negative that they had picked up was that one way (the more contemporary, spontaneous way) of doing things appeared to be the gold standard. Other ways (the more traditional ways) appeared to be regarded as ok but a bit inferior and second-class. And is not that to fall into the error of the Corinthian Church whose members earned Paul's rebuke because they had divided into groups each regarding themselves as superior to the others (1 Corinthians 1: 10-12)? ***Do we not need to find ways of demonstrating our unity in diversity and our valuing of many different traditions and expressions?***

2. 2 The message of one being better than the others comes across in a number of ways. Any one of these ways may well appear to be a product of an unfair misunderstanding but that would be to miss the point. The point is that these are *feelings that many people associated with TES have*. They are as follows:

- the hurt at the hint of fuddy-duddness when traditional services are sometimes referred to at contemporary services

¹¹ See 1.1 above

- the perception that the energies of the leadership were primarily directed to the contemporary services
- the feeling that the traditional service was not a key part of the big picture vision for BCP
- the suspicion of over-professionalisation and its consequence: that it undervalues lay volunteers particularly in matters relating to organising and participating in services.
- the fear that the locus of leadership has diminished for Wardens and the PCC and increased for the staff team¹²
- the reality that until recently the lay professional staff were almost completely unknown to the traditional service congregation
- the fact that the traditional service has much less prominence on the website
- the observation that for big occasions such as Confirmations it was the resources of the contemporary service that were used
- the perception that HTB (about which we have so much to celebrate and from which we have so much to learn) is often spoken of with such enthusiasm that it is easily interpreted as implying that methods that are effective in up-market, heavily CoE-churched central London are an exact model for the single CoE-churched market-town of Buckingham¹³
- the implied suggestion, heard from time to time at BPC, that the extraordinary and the miraculous are somehow more significant than the miracle of God's constancy in the ordinary and natural rhythms of life.

2.3 It is crucial to appreciate that these negatives come in the context of an overarching positive about what the Lord is doing at BPC. It is equally crucial to note that many of these negatives are a product of the almost inevitable imbalance that is created when something new is being birthed. We are confident that this imbalance – at bottom often a sense of being loved and appreciated less - can be put right. It's somewhat analogous to the impact of the birth of a second baby. Good parents soon come to realise that they need also to be aware of the needs of the older sibling. If they don't the Bible and common-sense observation both demonstrate that there is often very considerable, serious and dangerous alienation. Pursuing that analogy there is no doubt that the elder child - in this case the traditional service – has not been faultless. Its members have sometimes been over-sensitive; under-appreciative; negative; prone to be dismissive of what is happening in the contemporary services and, on occasions, have been hurtfully critical of any change. Our prayer, hope and belief however is that the frank identification of many positives as well as some negatives together with our conviction, greatly reinforced by our two meetings with Will, are that what is required is not a matter of working up a love for the elder but of **becoming more aware of the importance of demonstrating in practical ways the existing love for the elder**. And that's where the biblical stories are so important. The story of Joseph and his brothers showing us the destructive favouritism of bad fathering (Genesis 37) needs to be put alongside the story of wonderful fathering

¹² On this and the previous bullet point see para 9.2 below

¹³ Ironically, this perception does not do justice to the way HTB plants churches. In fact as footnote 12 shows it follows the diversity according to background / culture context model which we argue for

we see in the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). It shows us a father who loved both his sons equally and wanted *the very best for both of them*. So, as far as BPC is concerned, if the story of Jacob as a father is a warning, the story of the father in the Prodigal Son is (and this is our most important conclusion) **a challenge to BPC and to the Traditional Eucharistic Service (TES) to love, accept and enable each other**. And, following the distinction between essentials and non-essentials we pointed to in 1.4, is not this an essential? Does not the Gospel of Jesus Christ see love as a non-negotiable essential (1 John 4: 8)?

2.4 As this happens BPC will begin the process of somewhat recalibrating and rebalancing its culture. It will, furthermore we pray, lead to:

- re-evaluating the role of the TES within BPC
- revisioning it as an integral and precious part of discipling and growth at and through BPC
- rediscovering ways in which traditional and contemporary worshippers know themselves to be different but greatly valued and loved parts of the same family which the Lord has planted in Buckingham through BPC.

As this happens the different cultures of BPC will begin to share more and to care and love each other more as they demonstrate the wonderful unity the Lord gives through diversity. That is because unity in Christ, despite diversity which crosses every conceivable cultural, economic, sexual, religious and age boundary, is at the heart of that 'sociological impossibility'¹⁴ which is called the Church. **Unity in diversity should be seen to be woven into our church culture.**

¹⁴ Johannes Christiaan Hockendijk quoted in David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1993, (ISBN: 0 88344 719 3), 48

3: Outreach from TES

3.1 Churches that are growing in a context such as Buckingham often opt to be a **one church family** with several congregations. **We are convinced that this is the proper model for BPC as it seeks to build and model a church community in the midst of a town with a strong community spirit.** It is also the vision we have heard the Rector and others articulate many times. The other model which is sometimes adopted by very large churches or those with very distinctive linguistic and cultural groups is the 'several churches in one building (or in several buildings) but not part of the same family save in the sense that they have same Rector/Senior Pastor'. We don't think that this is the right model for BPC.

3.2 If we accept, as we all did, the first model as the one we should be aiming for our reviewing shows us that the TES needs to face the reality that it is in gentle decline¹⁵ and the wider church needs to find solutions to the fairly-acute feeling that it has been 'overlooked'. Addressing this issue would, we believe, encourage what could well be significant growth. Indeed all of us are convinced from our own experiences, and became even more convinced from what others shared with us and from stories within TES, that this development and growth can and should happen. That is particularly so in the sort of diverse and wide-ranging community that is part of the glorious, 'only one Anglican church' heritage of market-town Buckingham. There needs to be provision for the demographic, temperamental, sociological, cultural and church tradition range and variety we find in Buckingham.¹⁶ And that means that diversity is critical always remembering the point about unity in diversity made in 2.1 above.

3.3 And that leads directly to one of our most important conclusion: ***the TES can be a means of reaching out with the Gospel message to one significant section of this challenge.***

It was put to us that two key questions are:

Has BPC a vision to reach out to those over 55?

Can the TES be an instrument for this?

We would want to answer 'yes' to both questions. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of this over 55 group. We have been unable to discover precise demographic statistics for Buckingham but we have noted the prediction for Buckinghamshire that there will be a population growth by 2026 of about 10 per cent. Within this growth the number of those of working age is expected to rise by 4.7 percent; the number of young people by 10.8 percent *and the number of*

¹⁵ Some register research undertaken by Bob Legrove points to slow growth at the 9.30; slow decline at the 11am and significant growth at the 6pm

¹⁶ HTB is sometimes accused of being monochrome in its worship in Brompton. Whether or not that is true in Brompton it is certainly not true for its church plants which show wide-ranging variety relating to the cultural background of the area (see: Tim Thorlby, *Love, Sweat and Tears: Church planting in east London* (Research for the Local Church - 5), The Centre for Theology and Community, London 2016, iv-v & 87 http://www.theology-centre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ChurchPlanting_Final_online.pdf)

those over 65 by a staggering 27.8 percent.¹⁷ **If that is remotely near the mark there is work in abundance to be done for this age group.**

3.4 And the challenge to the TES within this older demographic is only going to grow. While of course many over 55s greatly enjoy informal and spontaneous worship most are likely to feel, impressionistic evidence suggests, more at home in a more liturgical and formal setting. There is no question therefore that the TES has a major challenge. If any of us ever thought of it as being a penultimate resting place for ageing fuddy-duddies we need to think again! **TES is a most important instrument for evangelism and discipling within BPC.**

3.5 And this is not only to over 55s. The reality is that the TES has a much wider age spread than many churches and this will increase if the vision for growth from a younger age group is realized (see 5.2). Younger people of course include the steady flow of students who attend TES and this is a specialist outreach challenge in itself. Even in the few months of our meeting we saw evidence of TES being an instrument of outreach. But if it is to grow and become a means of more sustained outreach, it needs the sort of incremental changes we outline below (see 4.1).

3.6 The great festivals, so central points in the Church's calendar, are obvious targets for outreach invitations as are other occasions which have a more secular background such as 'mothers' (as it has become) day' and 'fathers' day'. Arguably for the last two the focus should be on the 9.30 but perhaps flyers and invitations and publicity on the website and social media could mention both services with sufficient description to allow people to choose.

3.7 The challenge to the BPC leadership and to the TES congregants is to grasp the enormous potential of this service and to establish a growth strategy.

¹⁷ 'Demographic change in Buckinghamshire to 2026,' *Buckinghamshire Business First*, 25/05/2016

4: Worship

4.1 TESRG's starting place, recognised in the MOG TOR, is the commitment of the TES congregants to a more liturgical service than is offered at 9.30 or 6.00. However TESRG members, reflecting they are confident the position of most TES attenders, are very keen that this *should never mean being slavishly traditional*. Rather the opposite. They are convinced of the need for *enthusiasm, vision and creativity* within a liturgical framework at this service if TES is to reverse its gentle decline and develop and grow. One central thought that resonated with TESRG is that *change is likely to come not by doing radical things but rather by a number of small 'investment' changes over time (100 x 1%)*. As John Henry Newman famously put it 'to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often'.¹⁸

4.2 *The TES needs more careful planning and creativity.* It's very easy for a liturgical service to be done by the book by a clerical automaton.¹⁹ As we spoke with experienced people we realised the need for ***some constancy of leadership so that the congregation could feel they had one or two leaders whom they knew and loved as spiritual leaders.*** We wonder whether any church leader can have sufficient creative energy for leading three culturally different services on the same day. That question makes some delegation, perhaps to another clergy person - of course under the guidance and authority of the Rector - an option to be carefully considered if the gentle creativity, outreach vision, discipling and pastoral care we seek are to happen. We are increasingly convinced that, in any event, there needs to be ***delegation to a small creative team,*** which would take ownership of this service - in planning and in overseeing implementation. This might include a clergy person either as a member or as a designated consultant in specialist matters such as making the best use of seasonal liturgies etc . There were many areas it could explore such as interviews, drama, testimonies and the hunger, identified for example in the Legrove Report, for more meditative reflection.

4.3 Precisely because it is more liturgical and formal *the TES can reach those who have certain personality types or more formal backgrounds* - or almost any personality type at certain times in their lives. Thus Pete Greig, a well-known charismatic leader, speaks of a very difficult time in his life:

my heart was simply too vulnerable to run the gauntlet of spontaneity every week. And so I found myself rising early on Sundays to sneak away to our local Anglican cathedral for a short, anonymous service of Holy Communion in that great, fan-vaulted, ancient barn. I hoped no one would recognise me. I was meant to be leading one of the wildest, most charismatic, least traditional congregations in town. After the services I would sometimes pull a hood over my head as if I were leaving a strip club rather than a cathedral. I was embarrassed to find myself sampling and even appreciating the kind of liturgy we had often denounced as 'dead religion', or 'vain repetition'.²⁰

¹⁸ John Wilkins, 'A farewell from the editor', *The Tablet*, 22/12/2003, (ISBN: 0039 8837), 4.

¹⁹ One of the people we have spoken to judges that the TES is the least 'thought through' service of any at BPC

²⁰ Pete Greig, *How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People*, John Murray, London 2019 (ISBN: 9781529374926), kindle location 1006

And the Lord has given us wonderful gifts for TES-style worship:

- ***a beautiful building which encourages meditation, prayer, reflection***
- ***a wonderful liturgy which speaks powerfully as it climaxes with the invitation to us to come to the rails compelled by Christ's love to receive even though 'our hands' are 'unclean, our hearts' are 'unprepared' and we 'not fit even to eat the crumbs from under your table'***
- ***gifted, empathetic leaders who teach and preach biblically, imaginatively and faithfully, love meaningfully and encourage people to reach out to the Lord as they seek His purpose and the leading of the Spirit for their lives***

4.4 There was ***considerable enthusiasm for the recent Staycation service*** and a desire to build something comparable into the regular rhythm of BPC life: once a month is probably too frequent but possibly quarterly.

4.5 We spent a little time discussing whether the freer non-eucharistic first Sunday of the month was the right way forward. Historically it came from the one Sunday in the month family service. That need is now met by the 9.30. Furthermore the service the majority of TES attenders most valued is a eucharistic service. Several demonstrate this by going to other churches on the first Sunday! On the other hand the taking of the services by Connect groups was sometimes very refreshing and creative. ***We therefore suggest that a way forward might be a more informal eucharist continuing to use a Connect groups.***

5: Pastoring, children and enabling a serving congregation

5.1 Provision of pastoring is of key importance in any church. The evidence is overwhelming that the senior leader (Rector) of a larger church cannot themselves do all, or even most, of the pastoring.²¹ However they can and should ensure that there is effective pastoring. We found a desire within the TES for **some identified person(s) who both look out and care for newcomers and their needs and also for those who worship regularly**. Some feel, as the Legrove Report puts it, 'unwelcome, undervalued and irrelevant'. And such feelings need to be urgently addressed.

5.2 Most families with children will understandably gravitate to the 9.30. But some will not. Add in the need for the teaching of the choir children and **expanding the provision for children may well become an important item on the agenda**. If and as it becomes necessary TES would seek guidance from the staff but it should ideally, on the principle of growing volunteers,²² be covered from within in its own membership.

5.3 TES has moved from a service which was the central backbone of the church to being a service where its brilliantly organised TES rota system is beginning to creak. Furthermore some of its members, who have given much faithful service, have moved to the margins of both the service and in some cases of BPC life. Some of them need to be encouraged to come back but **they also need to be assisted in or sometimes relieved from their roles**. We also feel that **some greater training needs to be given to those with public roles** such as reading; leading intercessions, welcoming etc

²¹ See as one example among many James Emery White, 'The Shepherd-Rancher Divide,' Church & Culture Blog, vol 15, no 52 01/07/2019, <https://www.churchandculture.org/blog/2019/7/1/the-shepherd-rancher-divide>

²² See also point 9.2 below

6: Music

6.1 Our evening with Rob and our conversation with Ali reinforced our sense of the key importance of music to the life of the Church. We are blessed with a very talented and much admired musician in Rob. The choir makes a very significant contribution to the worship. It became very clear that it is a centre of prayer, fellowship and pastoral care. Rob spoke movingly of the importance of accessing the Holy Spirit through music. These are precious foundational qualities - not always very evident in church choirs!

6.2 It is also evident that there are a number of areas that need *imagination, change or development*. These are as follows:

- a) *TES musicians' perspectives on BPC life*. The developments in other areas of BPC's life are ones that we are enthusiastically positive about. They have had however the inevitable effect of moving the TES, and therefore the choir, from being the 'pulsating centre' of BPC.²³ This is observed in many different ways but to mention a few:
- the marginalisation of the Choir on BPC's web site and the observation that it is often not mentioned when folk are challenged on leaflets and displays and other outlets such as youth promotion, to become more committed in volunteering for service roles
 - the feeling that the choir have had to make many sacrifices such as the dropping of the evening Advent Carol Service
 - the observation that (no doubt through ignorance or carelessness) various pieces of equipment are sometimes 'stored' in a way which causes aggravation and friction
 - the sense of being undervalued/ignored/unappreciated by, indeed unknown to, the wider church family

So Rob spoke of feeling unknown when entering the building following the 09:30 and his sense of unease that the two congregations appear like strangers to one another when he arrives in church. We fully recognise that folk from the other services may also feel that they are ignored/undervalued/misunderstood by TES congregants. And that is the problem. There is a separation that is unhealthy. It is also we believe unnecessary. We have spoken to the musicians from both the traditional and contemporary sides of BPC's rich life and they are very open to exploring ways of working together – for example more 'staycation' type services.²⁴ One way of bridging this divide would be for Ali to become part of the choir. This was part of his brief in his previous job. He is very willing to do this if it can be facilitated. Another might be for Rob to be involved occasionally in contemporary worship. This would also mean that he would become known to the wider church – perhaps through a brief interview with him. As well, there needs to be an established way – most obviously through Rob and Ali - of discussing the sort of niggles between the traditional and contemporary services that easily arise. This would avoid any unnecessary escalating of these up to Rector/Warden/PCC levels. ***The over-arching message is***

²³ See also para 9.1 below

²⁴ See point 4.4 above

encouraging TES music as important both to its congregants and to the wider life of BPC

- b) *Range of music and instrumentalists.* Rob carefully chooses the hymns a couple of months in advance. He uses the Royal School of Church Music guidelines. While these give a broad cross-section of hymns/songs we are somewhat limited by our rather out of date hymn/song books. With the use of overheads this should no longer be a problem. Hence our range of choice is greatly widened. Rob is, furthermore, and much more than many organists, very flexible about requests by preachers for alterations to hymns - even if made late in the day. We also spoke with Rob about the idea of forming a small creative team to give its mind to the TES.²⁵ He is more than happy to have their input on the choice of music and indeed to the possibility of using instrumentalists from time to time. *And this is urgently needed.*
- c) *The choir.* Rob was very frank that the choir needs energising in its recruitment both in the children's and adult sections. **An obvious way forward would be for one or two people to take charge of recruitment – including visiting local schools.**
- d) *The positioning of the choir.* We are aware of this and have discussed its positioning a little. Rob is open to the proposal that the choir should sing from in front of the screen. **To be considered**
- e) *Audio system.* The excellent audio system in the church seems to be much less adequate for the choir and musicians, and for those in the platform area in front of the screen. The speakers to the choir need improving – particularly for those with hearing problems. Furthermore the choir is not amplified to the congregation. Ali assures us that this can be fixed but at the cost of purchasing additional equipment. **Urgent consultation is required.**
- f) *The possibility of separating the role of organist from that of choir leader/conductor.* This is a pattern that is used in Cathedrals and in other large churches. The organ at BPC is normally situated in a way which makes it impossible for the organist to conduct the whole choir. **Something to be examined.**
- g) *The possibility of using augmentors for special occasions.* This is something several of us have seen working extremely successfully. It involves recruiting members of the church who have musical gifts but are not part of the choir to augment the musicians – both singers and instrumentalists – for the big services such as the Carol service, special Christmas services, Easter etc. It produces great music (as we heard from the descant section of the 2019 Carol Service), increases fellowship across the church and can also be a catalyst to the augmentors to becoming regular choir members. **Worth further exploration.**

²⁵ See point 4.2 above

7: Timing of the service

7.1 Timing was not within our TOR as these were formulated before it emerged as the major issue it has become. Thus it was after we had started that the Legrove Report was presented. It made it abundantly clear that the 11.15 start time is **a very considerable problem for a significant number of people**. It may well be that it has become a 'straw that broke the camel's back' matter. We have become very aware not only of the issue of the start time of TES but of the constraints that very tight timing puts on creativity in worship, on intercessions, on preaching, on leading the liturgy in an unhurried way and on post-service fellowship and inter-change. Will was very open about the enormous time pressures that setting up and dismantling and pre-service choir and instrumental practice/tuning etc places on all concerned. It is also taken as read that we want a solution which works as well and hopefully better for *all the services*. And we are very aware that the TES is but one cog in a complex and delicate mechanism. As always the question is which pattern best fits the brief we all share of discipling those already part of the Church and reaching out to those who are not.

7.2 In our conversation with Will a number of timing options emerged:

- a) *Stay with the 11.15 time.* Given the amount of angst this has caused it would seem to be by far the 'least good' option and would give rise to the greatest disappointment within the TES.
- b) *Move the 11.15 to 9 or 9.15am and the 9.30 to 11am.* We cannot at the moment predict what impact this would have on the respective congregations. What we do know is that it is the pattern used in quite a few churches often on the grounds that families with older children prefer a later start on a Sunday morning! It would give a somewhat less pressurised end-point to the TES.
- c) *Move the 9.30 to the afternoon – perhaps 4pm.* This is a pattern used by an increasing number of churches in the UK and in the USA largely because of the competing attractions of Sunday am sport and other activities. When it was last discussed it was clear that at least some of the present 9.30 worshippers would find this very difficult as might those undertaking the setting up for the informal services and those involved in music practice. This is because it could mean that they were in church for a very long time. On the other hand they would only have to set-up once and so there must be a time-saving somewhere. It would, as Legrove shows in its analysis to the 'summer schedule' pattern, be very popular with TES congregants. It might be good if someone was charged with undertaking an investigation into the patterns that have, or are, emerging across the country. The Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS) or some such organisation might be able to paint the wider picture of what works best in growing churches.

7.3 Any solution proposed is almost certain to be criticised by some and for reasons that carry weight. The decision will need to be made on the grounds of what is best for most people across services *and also for those we seek to reach beyond the church family*. It's not our decision but **we do feel that option c above would be the best for the TES**. Failing that option b though only after consulting with the congregation (see next point) to ensure that they would find this preferable to a 11.15 start.

8: Communication across the Church family

8.1 It is noteworthy that while the NT church encouraged diversity it took considerable pains to involve and communicate with its diverse and dispersed parts when decisions were being made (eg Acts 15: 22ff). There is the feeling that this model has at least partially broken down in relation to the TES. For example the Legrove Report points to a 'lack of prior consultation' about the timing changes which caused TES members to feel 'excluded and dictated to'. This again arises as an unintended and undesired consequence of growth. As the centre of gravity of the Church changes and as there are more groups and worshipping centres it's easy to overlook the logistical difficulty of listening to and communicating with Church members in a more complex organisational structure. The TESRG also observed that there is much less coverage about the TES on BPC's website. To take one very significant example the website opens with three pictures of contemporary services and has none of a TES service! If our analysis is remotely near the mark then this is not only deflating to the TES but counter-productive to BPC's goal of growth. It means that it is striking only one part of its target audience which is or should surely be the whole of Buckingham. Furthermore when there are printed lists of service activities to encourage volunteers there is often no mention of TES needs - choir, servers etc. ***BPC needs to develop a culture where TES is automatically included in all relevant communication.***

8.2 Communication to advertise what it stands for in its diverse particularity will also become of much greater importance to TES. It will need to be imaginative and creative in finding appropriate ways of undertaking this. Perhaps it can be helped by the wider church family who will almost certainly be more familiar with graphic design, the social media etc.

9: Returning the TES to the heart of BPC

9.1 The evidence of a feeling of the marginalisation of the TES is clear from the above. Part of this is the reality that the TES was once the controlling centre of BPC and is so no longer. We wholly accept that some movement of the TES from the centre is an inevitable and proper consequence of growth. But has it gone too far and moved to places which the TES congregants feel are distant and almost inaccessible? Several of the people we interviewed pointed to the perception that the locus of much decision-making, and therefore of much effective power, has moved from the PCC, wardens and Incumbent to the staff team and Incumbent. One indication of this is the way the staff team are sometimes referred to as the leadership team. Clearly as the staff team increases in size it is inevitable and right that many matters once discussed in the PCC should now devolve to it.²⁶ But the PCC, Wardens and Incumbent never lose their final and legal role and responsibility in making and overseeing the key decisions about the policy and direction of the Church. We know that this is accepted in principle but we feel that there is work to be done to ensure that it is demonstrated and communicated in practice. TES congregants, who as a group undertake a great deal of work for the church and are often significant and generous givers, also observe that while some of them are members of the PCC, none of them have a natural access to the staff team. And so the sense of marginalisation of TES folk is increased. ***TES congregants need to be encouraged by its leaders and by BPC to take a full part in the life and decision-making of the church.***

9.2 Some of our interviewees also pointed to the de-skilling and demotivating impact new professional staff can have on lay volunteers. It's easy for such volunteers, even if very skilled and accomplished, to feel underappreciated, undervalued, surplus to requirement and moved to the margins in areas where once they were the sole leaders. When that happens it can devalue volunteer recruitment. Do we not rather need to emphasize that the Bible constantly shows us the Lord calling the ordinary and apparently unqualified to service? We are drawn to Rick Warren's understanding that the Lord gives churches people who are 'good enough' to do His work.²⁷ At the same time, and as in the previous paragraph, a move towards some professionalization is good and necessary as BPC grows. But that should not blind us to the impact of professionalization. The TES is much less affected by such 'professionalisation' but it is not unaffected. Because it is the service which uses more lay volunteers in an organised way than any other, it's easy to pick up the (probably totally unintended) message that it is second-rate in comparison to the professionalism (as it can appear from the outside) of the more contemporary services. ***TES leaders and BPC need to encourage a culture of volunteering.***

²⁶ 'The bigger the church the more items have to be given to the staff to determine or execute on their own.' (Tim Keller, 'Leadership and Church Size Dynamics,' Article presented at the Next Level Conference, Redeemer Church Planting Center, Sept. 2006).

²⁷ 'Some churches hold up such a standard of excellence that they basically say to volunteers, "If you're not a professional, you don't need to apply, because we only want the very best." That creates a congregation of passive spectators. ... Yet, our growth at Saddleback has happened because we hold to the "good enough" principle, which allows far more people to get involved. We simplify everything and accept less than perfect performance in order to mobilize more people. It doesn't have to be perfect for God to use and bless it.' (Rick Warren, 'Attract More Volunteers With the 'Good Enough' Principle,' *pastors.com*, 16/04/2012 <http://pastors.com/attract-more-volunteers-with-the-good-enough-principle/>)

10: Conclusion

10.1 The TES is one jewel in the BPC crown. Until recently it was the most prominent. Other jewels now shine and that's a great cause for praise and celebration. What is not a matter for praise and celebration is that this once most prominent jewel feels, with some justification as we have described, that it has been rather 'overlooked'. Every person we have talked to, and most of all Will, encourages us to believe that there is a great desire to rediscover and encourage the rich and diverse tradition in which it stands and to ensure that it is a valued part at the heart of BPC. It is vital that BPC finds ways of doing that. If and as it does we are convinced that the TES will have a key role in spreading the word of God in Buckingham. Nothing however in the Bible or in Church History suggests that that will be a walk in the park! It will need much prayerful, imaginative and realistic work from many church leaders and members and a commitment of the whole church to unity across diversity.

10.2 What we hope, pray and believe is that as MOG, the PCC and others review our review they will be given great wisdom to *reflect, identify and act*. In that task Paul's plea to the Colossians seems especially relevant to where we are at BPC: 'And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.' (Colossians 3:14, The Message)

Recommendations

- 1. That MOG and the PCC find ways of ensuring that the TES congregants know that they are loved and enabled to minister significantly in the church and that they address the perception that some services or spiritualities are better than others.²⁸**
- 2. That MOG and the PCC ensure that the reviewing, reflecting, identifying and acting model is used to heal the 'overlooked' feeling of the TES.**
- 3. That MOG and the PCC ensure that the TES is a regular item on their agendas.**
- 4. That MOG ensures that the TES has an outreach strategy.**
- 5. That MOG and the PCC ensure that a small creative team is appointed to ensure imaginative planning of the TES.**
- 6. That MOG and the PCC demonstrate their valuing of the TES by ensuring that it has a significant place on the website and in advertising etc and that it is encouraged to make known what its particular brand within BPC is.**
- 7. That MOG and the PCC ensure that appropriate ways of improving communication in an expanding organization are suggested and implemented.**
- 8. That MOG and the PCC address the question of how best to ensure that there is greater continuity of Presidents at the TES.**
- 9. That MOG and the PCC ensure that there is adequate planning and developing of the TES including regular training for TES welcomers, readers, intercessors, communion assistants etc.**
- 10. That MOG and the PCC ensure that there are whole church worship occasions through the year.**
- 11. That MOG and the PCC ensure that ways are found for Rob and Ali to work closely together and for Ali to become part of the TES choir.**
- 12. That MOG and the PCC ensure that the items relating to music mentioned in 7.2 b and e-g are carefully considered and dealt with as appropriate.**
- 13. That MOG and the PCC ensure that any decision on timing takes account of the TES congregation's views.**
- 14. That MOG and the PCC consider how best to improve the pastoring of the TES congregation.**
15. That MOG and the PCC consider whether the first Sunday of the month should become a more informal eucharistic service with Connect group input.
16. That MOG and the PCC consider the possibility of doing more for students at TES and, when appropriate, the needs that will arise for more children's work which, ideally, might be guided and enabled but not led by the staff.
17. That MOG and the PCC consider the challenge ministering to students who attend TES
- 18. That MOG and the PCC consider the role of the staff team in decision making about policy.**
19. That MOG and the PCC consider how to value lay volunteers

Peter Williams Chair of and on behalf of TESRG, 20/01/2020, Final Summary version 1.8

²⁸ Items in bold have, in the view of the TESRG greater urgency than the others indicated.