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**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE (3)**

The Joint Working Group set up between the Anglican churches in Southborough and Bidborough has now held its first three monthly meetings. A large amount of goodwill is already building up within the group with a positive attitude towards a good outcome.

The group’s main work has been on two fronts:

* exchange of information on certain aspects of ministry within each church with contributions from those leading children/youth ministry and work with toddlers and young families, leading to discussion of successes and some common problems and thoughts of future collaboration;
* consideration of possible structures to formalise any future collaboration. This is in the context of the Bishop’s desire to see much closer working between the parishes.

There are two main ways in which parishes can formally work together, teams and groups. Broadly, a team has a team rector and team vicars, with one joint PCC while each church has a District Church Council, to which certain matters are delegated. In contrast, in a group, each church has its own clergy and PCC. The clergy are authorised to work across the group, but only under the directions of the incumbent of the individual parish. The group may have a group council, and the agreed structure can set out which matters are to be dealt with by that council.

It is not as simple as choosing between the status quo, a team and a group, because it is also possible for a parish to join in a group with a team!

Some options would have significant implications for the Team Ministry in Southborough. Any changes would have to be discussed with the Rural Dean, Bishop and other patrons, as well as by individual churches.

In considering the relative merits of these various options, we are aiming to find a way to enable us all to work in collaborative ministry across Southborough.

No firm conclusions have been reached at this stage. The working group is to develop its thinking on the second aspect at its next meeting on 16 August. Please pray for your representatives and those of the other churches as we continue our deliberations.

**Rev Rachel Wilson Tina Clay Eric Wills**

3 August 2017

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