

Priest Idol session 4

Risk, reflection and change

BEFORE VIEWING:

- Share results from the Feedback Form.

Does the feedback have any common themes, or are different people's responses very different?

Start DVD at Priest Idol 2 – 30.15

Summary

Part 1: James and Jonathan decide to back the marketing company's campaign – 'Church Lite'. Meanwhile, James takes the gospel to the streets on Palm Sunday with a donkey and red balloons. The church hall is re-decorated for a concert. Steve presents 'Church Lite' to the Church Council, explaining his aim is to bring people to the church with an open mind. The rest is up to them.

Part 2: The Church Council reluctantly agree to 'Church Lite' although James doesn't think they've caught the vision. An interior designer starts work on a new reflection zone for the back of the church, designed to make a space that's attractive to people who don't normally come to church. The plans include moving the font.

(24 minutes)

AFTER VIEWING:

The media

- James used local radio to appeal for a donkey for Palm Sunday. How might churches use the media more effectively to get more free publicity?

Risk

- After acquiring a donkey and taking to the streets on Palm Sunday, James says, "The church has played it safe too much. We've got to move forward, stretch ourselves, stick our heads out and try something."

James would say that one of the things he has learnt personally from taking part in the programme is to take more risks – the courage to have a go and try things out. How might we encourage and help clergy to take risks and support them in that?

Social events

- The church holds a concert. How can social events help build church?

Church

- Jonathan says 'coming in to church to worship is like going to the foothills of heaven'.

Do you feel like that when entering church?!

If you don't, what might encourage and help you feel more like that?

Reflection Zone

- Work is begun on a Reflection Zone at the back of church which aims to be a sacred space where people can feel comfortable. A little bit of retreat. A non-threatening way of coming into the church, but a very welcoming way.

Jonathan comments, “Creating an environment in which people can relax and unwind and just be comfortable isn’t something that I’ve seen a church do before”.

- 73% of the population sees church as being a place of quiet or sanctuary (*Opinion Research Business Survey 2003*). 70% of the population say they pray and 76% say they have had a religious experience. 67% of the population says they wish that places of worship were more accessible to their local communities (*Opinion Research Business Survey 2005*).

In what way might your church provide space for reflection and retreat from a busy world both for regular worshippers and newcomers?

- Entering a church can be a big step if you are not used to it. It can feel daunting or strange – even spooky. How could your church make it easier for people to just ‘pop in’ or visit to see what is like?

Change and more change

- When the Church Council reluctantly agree to ‘Church Lite’, James says, “At the end of the day, it’s about change. Nobody likes change”.

Lundwood found it had to make changes to engage with newcomers and their community. Are there ways change can be introduced gently in churches, or is it better to bite the bullet and recognise not everyone will like change? Suggest some tips for introducing change into a church.

- As James struggles to get the PCC to agree to move the font, he comments, “You put a chair in a church and 30 years later you try to move that chair, you’re going to have the church split over it because that’s where it’s been”.

Are there similar issues in your church – there because they’ve always been? What might you re-arrange or sort out in a radical spring clean?

REFLECT/ RESEARCH

If money, resources and people were not an issue, what is the one thing you would love your church to do?

Is there anyway you could achieve something similar without the money, resources, people?

Lundwood benefited from outside resources. Are there people in your community or area who might help with advice and resources?

Bring your ideas to the next meeting.