

# Priest Idol session 6

If they come to church what will they find?

## BEFORE VIEWING:

- What do you think is the primary purpose of your church?  
Is it mainly for those inside or for those outside who don't yet come?

*Start DVD at Priest Idol 3 – 26.15*

### Summary

Part 1: The countdown to the 'Church Lite' events has begun. A party and a new kind of service are planned. The archdeacon looks for a Christian celebrity to launch the events and Toby Foster, the local stand up comedian comes to help James with his performance. Over 300 people come to the party, which includes a brass band, entertainment, barbecue and fireworks, but the big test remains. Will they come back to the new kind of service the next day?

Part 2: A record congregation of over 200 comes to the first 'Church Lite' service. There's a gospel choir and Jimmy Cricket and the congregation think it's brilliant. The church warden reckons 80-90% have never been to church before. Three months later there are 52 at a family-friendly service and the church warden reckons that all the interest is there, the atmosphere is better and better, and they're doing very well.

*(27 minutes)*

## AFTER VIEWING:

### How far will we change?

- Toby Foster, the stand up comedian, coaches James for the first 'Church Lite' service. Toby says, "Talk about them all the time. It's the only thing they are interested in. If they can see you're doing this for them, the more turned on they'll get". Do you agree – to get people interested in church or God we have to make it about them?

### The challenge

- James reckons 'Church Lite' is the most challenging thing he's done in his life. How can we best support, help and encourage clergy in what they do?

### Come on in

- At the massive party, over 300 people cross the threshold into the church grounds and church. Some think the more relaxed attitude might make them think about going to church again. Julian, from the marketing company, urges James to call the people there to action – to ask them to come back.

Think of the times and places newcomers cross the threshold of your church or grounds. How might you encourage and help them to come back?

## We're here for you?

- James tells those at the party, "All of this is about the church reconnecting with the community. It's about being available for you all. I know many of you have come in for baptisms, funerals and a few weddings but we're here for you for more than that".

Who is church mainly for: those inside or those outside who don't yet come?

- *"The church is the only society on earth that exists solely for the benefit of its non-members."* (attributed to Archbishop William Temple).

How far do you agree?

- How are these words of Jesus relevant?  
*"People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people to repent, but outcasts."* (Luke 5:31-32)

## A new kind of service

- Propaganda challenges the church to provide services which retain all the vital ingredients of church, but in a format that people who know nothing of the Christian tradition will find accessible – a shorter, simpler, brighter service.

What changes could you make to a church service to do this? What would you consider to be the vital ingredients to keep, and what could be changed?

- The first 'Church Lite' service sees a transformed church building, a gospel choir and Jimmy Cricket giving a very different kind of sermon. Many think it's brilliant. Steve, from the marketing company just hopes they can keep it rolling, so it's not a one-off but the start of something which will bring people in.

Three months after the launch, there are 52 at a family-friendly service, which is entirely home grown. James reckons Church Lite "has told the village that the church is here – that there's new life here."

What message do you think your church gives to the community?

## Looking back

- James compares his congregation to the television programme The Simpsons – all mad at each other during the episode, but at the end of the episode all coming back together as a family. "We've had some good times together, some struggles, some people a bit upset but at the end of the day, we've had some really good times."

Is this a good description of the church?

## Looking forward

- Jonathan's final comment: "So often we talk about taking care, but I think the job of the church is to take risks. I hope they'll see what we've done and try it for themselves – making a splash."

Where might your church take more risks?

- From the experience of Lundwood, what enthuses you most? What might you take and try?

How might talk become action?