



Reflection by Rev'd Andrew Down

**Patronal Festival
St Peter and St Paul
Broadhempston**

On the Patronal Festival of St Peter and St Paul's Church Broadhempston, we reflect on the role of this beautiful ancient building dedicated to these two saints (and originally of course to St Petroc). What place has this building had in village life of the past? What is its place today? What about the future?

In May a wide variety of people (approx 30) from across the village of Broadhempston met in St Peter and St Paul's to discuss and share ideas about the place of the church building, its gift to the village and role in community life. Three major themes came out during the discussions across the evening, summarized below.

The Church of St Peter and St Paul's is....

1. A Sacred Place of Prayer and Worship

There was talk of people's connection to the building as a sacred place of Christian Worship, whether they were people of faith or none. This included coming to a baptism, wedding or funeral or one of the major festivals of the year... Christmas, Easter, Harvest, Remembrance. More generally a wide group of people value having a place set aside in the community that is a sanctuary for reflection, prayer and contemplation...a place to come and be quiet and simply be. Then there are the regular services and gathered times of prayer and worship be it Sunday Holy Communion Services or in the week for silent prayer and meditation or Celtic morning prayer.

2. A place of creativity, story, the arts, history and song.

There was talk of the ambiance, atmosphere, history, acoustics and setting being particularly suitable and helpful for artistic endeavours and gatherings. Musical concerts are well established and there is energy to develop and extend these endeavours. There were suggestions about using the space as a rehearsal and practice space. The building already hosts the community children's and adult library which are well used and there has been the suggestion of extending the activities from these to include story times and storytelling. This could extend further to include poetry writing workshops and recitals. The suggestion was made to use the space for art exhibitions so including the visual arts. Finally, the history group in the village already use the church as a permanent display venue and we might want to think how we extend this to tell other stories from our history.

3. A place of community and gathering for all and offering something particular to those struggling or on the margins.

There was talk of the value of wider community gatherings held in the beautiful church building and how it has a particular inclusive, calming and helpful effect for those struggling for whatever reason. The building has already provided a welcome home for the history group and community library. There was a particular suggestion that it would be a good place and venue for those suffering from dementia e.g. for running a dementia cafe. There is also some thought that if set up sensitively, it could be made available and offer an overspill venue at busy booking times for the successful village hall or as a second venue should events outgrow the village hall. It is already used regularly by the school and could be used more maybe for activities that the building particularly lends itself to....creativity, music, art, history, reflection.

St Peter and St Pauls a place of....

.....contemplation, creativity and community.....prayer, performance and presence.....sanctuary, song and story..... believing, beauty and belonging.

The meeting in May was a first step on an important journey. A very encouraging and fruitful gathering with lots of connections made. Now the work begins to focus on what the building needs to make it fit for purpose for future generations and to fulfil its potential as a place of prayer, creativity and community. Three things are going to now be considered and worked on:

1. Making the building watertight and structurally sound with a focus in this on the bell tower and bells.
2. Making the building accessible with a focus on the need for toilet and kitchen facilities.
3. Making the building flexible with a focus on how we can make the pews movable.

A group are meeting in July to start to look at these issues and how work might be advanced and funded. Do pray for all those involved in this exciting project and if you would like to join it, please contact Paul Russell [Paul Russell](#) who is one of the Churchwardens of St Peter and St Paul's, Broadhempston.