

From Adrian Bulley, Wessex Synod Moderator

Dear friend,

In the middle of a report to Mission Council on small churches, dating (I think) from the late 1990's, there appeared the following list under the title '**Marks of Viability**'. It was offered as a tool to districts and synods who might have been questioning the future of some of their smaller congregations:

- **Open to the Spirit**
- **Open to one another**
- **Open to people**
- **Open to change**
- **Open to the community around**
- **Open to receiving help**
- **Open to developing local leadership**
- **Open to learning and nurturing**
- **Open to listen**

Like so many reports over the years, this one has been largely forgotten, but I was struck by the '**Marks of Vitality**' when I first came across them, not because they are a useful bench mark for determining the vitality of small churches, but because the list is equally valid in considering the vitality of all churches, large, small and in between, and in their various settings. That list contains the right challenges for us all.

I resurrect the list now because it seems to me that each church in the Synod would do well to measure their life against those yardsticks, so I offer it to you and your church for reflection.

We are now in the Prayer Year of **Vision4Life** in which we focus upon the transforming power of prayer. My challenge is to use the '**Marks of Vitality**' in your corporate and individual prayer life during this year, and to listen for what God might be saying to you about your church and how it might be transformed to become more open.

With love and best wishes,

