

Report from the Deanery Synod Meeting on Thursday 20th January 2022

Sixty -Five visitors from across the Deanery attended the meeting.

There was a general feeling that not all parishes had had the opportunity to discuss prior to the meeting, and that people could have done with more notice of the questions to be discussed. There was also a feeling that Parish Councils could have been given an active role in leading on this within their respective parishes. There was a feeling that there has been a lack of communication within some of the parishes giving some more of an opportunity to be more proactive than others.

The yellow highlighted responses are those that came up repeatedly.

Parishes Represented Were:

Christ The King Academy (Andy Riding – Representative)
 Corpus Christ, Clifton (Br Andrew Ferris and Canon Anthony Dolan – Representatives)
 Holy Spirit, West Bridgford
 Holy Spirit and Our Lady, Cotgrave
 Holy Cross, Hucknall
 Our Lady of the Angels, East Leake
 Our Lady of Good Counsel, Eastwood (Richard Fullbrook & Marilyn Blackburn– representatives)
 Our Lady and St Patrick, The Meadows (Br Andrew Ferris and Canon Anthony Dolan – Representatives)
 Our Lady and St Thomas Ilkeston
 Our Lady of the Assumption, Beeston
 Sacred Heart
 St Anthonys, Calverton
 St Augustine's School, Mapperley
 St Barnabas Cathedral, Nottingham (Representative Fr Malachi)
 St Hugh of Lincoln, Bilborough (Mary Howson – representative)
 St Thomas More, Wollaton (Richard Dinsdale – Representative)
 St Annes, Radcliffe on Trent
 St John the Evangelist, Stapleford
 St Thomas's Primary, Ilkeston (Sue Doczyninska – Representative)
 St Margarets, Clitheroe, Keyworth (Gareth Thomas – Representative)
 St Hughs, Bilborough

St Teresas, Aspley (Fr Stanley Ofoegbu and David Attewell – Representative)
 St Francis of Assisi, Long Eaton
 The Good Shepherd, Arnold (Hosting the event)
 University of Nottingham, Chaplaincy (Claire Jenkins – Representative)

What has the synod process revealed about your parish/school?

The primary school children have taken an active and creative interest in envisioning a model of their dream church. The older ones supported the younger ones to put their ideas into being, and also discussed issues relevant to them. (St Teresas) – **Would be good to get this feedback.**

Trinity School Feedback:

Trinity students felt the church needed to be more inclusive and:

- Reach out to the poor, not just those who can support the church financially.
- More support for those who have a disability, illness and the elderly who might not be able to get to Mass independently.
- Support the homeless
- More follow up for the children who disappear after First Communion
- Welcome those who are part of the LGGBT+ Community.
- Be less judgemental and stop stereotyping
- Be more supportive

Trinity students felt that people were now scared to attend Mass and be labelled Catholic because of all the adverse publicity around abuse in the Catholic Church.

- They felt that the Catholic Church is stuck in the past and is not in the 21st Century in its outlook.
- The Catholic Church is dry and not accessible for young people, especially children in terms of the language used.
- **There needs to be a Youth Group that offers experiences such as those at the Briars for young people.**

- The church needs to be more outward looking, it looks inwardly

Good Shepherd Response: “Our parish and school should not be places for just their members (i.e., the parishioners of the Good Shepherd Church and the Governors, teachers, parents and children of our school. We should not close the world out, but open to all – beacons in our society/ locality”

Our Lady of Assumption and St Francis of Assisi response: “We need to be a more active and visible presence in the life of the local community – get involved in supporting local groups to help the disadvantaged, don’t be constrained by bricks and mortar.”

General Responses from All Churches:

“As a parish we need to be **more open**, more ecumenical, bolder”.

“**We need to engage younger people so we don’t lose our churches.**”

“How fragmented we have become – **lost sense of who we are** – need to rebuild the parish – what it means to be a church”

“COVID has created a wish not to be physically present in some communities.”

“There is a fundamental disorganisation which affects communication, **sense of identity – we do not know who we are**”

“Fragmented from LGBT+, Divorced, Separated, lapsed, people who have had abortions – no sense of healing, young people, local community outside the parish”

“RE Curriculum is a turn off for children, they are rejecting RE, teachers also less engaged. Briars team enthuses them again – loss of a generation. Not tolerant, not cool. Continuity needed to enthuse the young.”

“Reintroduce the Children’s liturgy and engage parents”.

“People want to be part of a community, but the Church prevents entry as too judgemental.”

“Want women priests and deacons, married priests, married deacons to be ordained. Allow back lapsed, divorced.”

“Ethnic Communities not being reflected in Liturgy.”

The need to be clear about the role of the laity.

Universal Church needs to understand that it has to change.

Change to Celibacy Rules and **admit women into the priesthood.**

Galatians 3: 28.29

Conclusion = Significant theme: Loss of Identity

What are the actions your parish/school are going to carry out and what is the hoped-for fruit of these actions?

Corpus Christi Parish Clifton want to become more missionary. The hoped-for fruit is to attract more people to mass, especially young people. They also want to reach out to the community and other churches. They want become more ecumenical and welcoming.

- **One young person from the Secondary School to be invited onto the PCC for one year term.**
- Questionnaire for all the students on their views/ aims of the Synod. Give the young people a voice rather than deciding what they might want.
- **Open church outside of Mass times on one day (3-4pm) for tea/ cake and interactive prayer stations set up in church.**

The Holy Cross, Hucknall run a café for people feeling isolated, this gives people the opportunity to connect with others – they want to build upon the success of this and expand it. The Café is open to all (Catholics and Non-Catholics). The impact of COVID has left more people feeling isolated. They are thinking about posting fliers through local letterboxes to invite people to drop in.

The hope is that isolated people, such as divorcees feel supported, whereas before they felt the church was not supportive – this created a barrier to them feeling part of the church.

Other minorities feel excluded e.g. LGBT+ Community – the café is a space where they can come and be heard, be welcomed and be.

The Holy Cross, Hucknall used to have a soup kitchen after mid-week mass – they would like to restart this.

The Holy Cross Hucknall is going to ask the parish council to take a more active role in the synod process.

St Teresa of Lisieux Aspley ran an International Mass at Pentecost for 6 years when Fr Michael was priest and then again in 2018 when Fr. Stanley was there. It hasn't happened since due to Covid. This mass encouraged inclusion as the liturgy was led by communities from Africa, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Poland. This Mass grew in popularity with visitors coming from across the Diocese to attend, and there was a World Foods event after the Mass where lunch was served by members of the different communities so people got an opportunity to try foods from the different countries. St Teresa's hope to reintroduce this event; however as with many events, this one was co-ordinated by a parishioner in his 80s now and unwell, and it's whether others will step up and take on that co-ordinating and responsibility.

This type of event is something that could be replicated in other parishes and is a great example of encouraging inclusivity, celebrating diversity and bringing different cultures together by sharing of food and worship.

Our Lady's Bulwell – Deacon Martin started a café in the Church Hall.

General Responses from All Churches:

Much more communication which is open, honest and true, in relation to relationships this is crucial.

To try to overcome indifference and apathy.

To become more inclusive. (This point was raised repeatedly)

Bringing back the Children's liturgy.

Setting up a Parish Council

Develop a plan as so much needs rebuilding from scratch, parish database, youth clubs, send out invitations.

Construct a parish social area for coffee after **all** masses, so people have the opportunity to get to know who else attends that Mass.

Carry out an evaluation of people's needs.

Charity Market Stall – invites advertising.

Open Days

Bereavement Group (this was requested repeatedly)

Connection Group open to Community.

Redo website so it is clear, modernised, interactive for young people.

Go to the people, not wait for them to come to us.

Reach out to new housing developments.

A request to carry on streaming as it allows those who are housebound to still connect to their parishes

Encourage Prayer groups and Bible Studies, perhaps in each other's homes rather than at church so can get to know each other better.

Pastoral Team / Parish to ring the elderly / housebound once a week for a check in.

Our Lady of the Assumption and St Francis of Assisi suggested a scheme where First Holy Communion Children adopt a Grandparent as a prayer partner.

What similarities or opportunities to work more closer together for the benefit of our county and making Christ and His Church known here?

Good Shepherd Response: “Work with people of all faiths and those with none to find common ground to create a better society and a living church.”

General Responses from All Churches:

- Work with neighbouring Parish to look at how their parish council is working so well.
- Share the work of the café with neighbouring parish.
- Link parish councils together as well as other groups within the parishes such as CAFOD, Caritas, SVP.
- Deaneries to identify common good ideas and share these.
- Identify Good practice as a resource for others to follow or make contact for support.
- More sharing of sacramental preparation.
- Empower the laity
- Church more outspoken on social issues
- Really Engage with social media – Meet young people where they are.

Any Other thoughts, discussion or points you would like to forward to the Deans for their report?

How do we attract more priests?

Both Calverton and St Hughs are anxious that their respective churches might close and want to find a different way forward.

Masses for Children

Work to get young people back into the churches.

Our Lady of Assumption and St Francis of Assisi felt that there should be more events and groups with which young people can identify and that the church needed to stop being insular. Teenagers had said that Mass is boring and irrelevant and that the Parish does not offer anything else to capture their interest or imagination.

There was a feeling that people had lost touch with what Mass actually is, what you are coming to, to be in the Presence of Christ, instead there was a box ticking exercise of: "I've been to Mass".

They felt a need for Christian Unity, for ecumenicalism.

There is a perception that the church generally is not supportive of divorcees , this is a barrier to them engaging.

Minorities feel excluded (eg LGBT+ community). (This was raised repeatedly).

There is a perceived lower status of women within the church, women need to be involved as deacons and be given more authority. It was felt that there was a lack of women in the decision-making processes. Having a token woman is not enough.

Equality for All.

Respect for each person.

Priest "training" shouldn't be all at Seminary, detached from outside life. Would be better done (at least in part) at a university and in Community. Women need to be involved in the training too.

Safeguarding needs a much higher priority at parish level.

Parishes could benefit from a bereavement group.

Any modernisation of the church needs to be universal, not just parochial. Needs to be a much greater diversity throughout the whole structure of the church.

Need to have a flattened hierarchy

Concluding Comments / Observations

The overarching themes to develop and improve were:

- **Relationships,**
- **Engagement,**
- **Community,**
- **Youth,**
- **Pastoral Leadership,**
- **Outreach**

The Church is declining in membership, not just the Catholic Church, across the board, we need to understand why the church is no longer relevant to people, especially young people, and the church should take responsibility to rectify this trend. Possible reasons:

Adverse publicity regarding abuse in the Catholic Church, and the feeling that this has not been dealt with adequately. A feeling that it has been ignored / covered up. The revelations of abuse have been throughout, from priests, convents and the shocking revelations from the First Nations Residential Schools in Canada and previous to this the Child migrants sent to Australia and elsewhere.

A feeling that the Catholic Church is out of date and out of step with the times, with rules and practices that were formulated many centuries ago when times were very different.

Removal of some masses and closure of parishes results in the eroding of parish communities and reinforces the message of “irrelevance”.

The declining number of priests is an opportunity for the church to re-evaluate the nature of ministry and empower the laity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church stresses the importance of the lay faithful and their vocation and gives guidance on the participation of lay people in Christ's priestly office.

Many people ask why Deacons cannot be commissioned to celebrate mass in their communities and are also now raising the question about the ordination of women to the priesthood.

Inclusion was repeatedly mentioned, particularly with regard to LGBT+ Community. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: **“They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided....”**