

Note on parish Consultation & Synod Response

As requested I am offering a few comments on the November 21st parish consultation which I was unable to attend and also give a response to the questions suggested by Bishop Patrick

Parish Meeting

Redevelopment of the parish centre

a) as set out in the points from Fr Gerry, we must accept regrettable though it is, that the current situation is not sustainable from a financial, personnel or pastoral point of view

We need to reduce costs, make proper use of a largely under-utilised building whilst continuing to offer a meeting facility for the parish and for outside groups (albeit on a reduced scale) and reduce the administrative burden on the parish

b) only one option was set out- I don't have an alternative proposal but perhaps before such a major decision is reached other options to address the current problems should be explored Perhaps a brainstorming session should be held involving a group from the parish and if possible including people with expertise/experience of such a project in other parishes

c) if adapting the buildings to provide housing is part of the solution it should be "social" housing to help tackle the great need for affordable housing etc in Buxton and also should be built to high environmental standards

d) I have some doubts that adapting the side aisle of the church will provide a very satisfactory meeting space but have not really looked at it properly

e) this is a major decision and one about which many parishioners will feel very strongly - so we should continue to take time & listen to all points of view

(We have two catholic schools in the town and there must be 100? or so children of nominally catholic parents living in Buxton. Why do 90% of them have virtually no connection with the parish ? We have been encouraged by the Pope and the Bishop to get the responses of such groups not just regular church goers. Can we organise a letter to them asking them politely to give us their honest view of the parish and the church overall?)

Synod Response

The points raised at the parish meeting as summarised in the note were understandably almost exclusively devoted to things the parish should be considering doing locally.

We have however also been asked by the Bishop and by Pope Francis to submit our thoughts(dreams) for the whole church and what we would like to see the Bishops discuss at the full Synod of the church in 2023

This will involve prayer and attentive listening to each other and also where possible hearing from those who feel rejected or alienated from the church

The background to the Synod is that the church is in crisis.

Numbers attending are dropping fast not only in the UK but in the rest of Europe and the USA - especially among young people (This is also true of most mainstream churches not just the catholic church) But the catholic church has a particular problem of declining numbers of priests so that within 10/20 years there will be an acute shortage if current trends continue

But the church has great strengths and does wonderful work. So we should look on the Synod process as an opportunity to celebrate this and to offer our thoughts on how this may be enhanced and also honestly look at what changes might be considered to help address some of the problems

I list below a number of issues/dreams that I personally would wish to ask the Bishop to take forward to the Synod deliberations:-

- 1 that the church becomes genuinely inclusive so that the laity is fully involved in the decision making processes and that it is not left exclusively to clerics
- 2 that the possibility of married priests should be reconsidered
- 3 that it is recognised that currently women are largely marginalised in the church - and that they should be fully represented in diocesan and Vatican decision making bodies
- 4 that the question of women deacons and priests should be discussed
- 5 that priority be given at all levels to the urgent question of the environmental crisis and the scandal of inequality and poverty within and between societies

Mike Monaghan 07/12/2021

St Annes and the Synod

Our Parish, the Deanery and the Diocese have an exciting and vital role to play ensuring our Faith meets the challenges of the future, locally, nationally, and internationally.

We do not know all the problems the Church will face in the rapidly changing climates for the Future.

We do know

- a. Church numbers are falling
- b. Most of our parishioners are elderly
- c. Young people do not appear to be interested in the Faith, but they are morally sound, compassionate, and caring
- d. Church finances, not least in our Parish, are not good. They will become critical without serious action.
- e. We have a shortage of Priests and Deacons. This will not improve.

The Holy Father has said “we need the ever-new breath of God, the Spirit, who sets us free from every form of self-absorption, revives what is moribund, loosens shackles, and spreads joy. There is no need to create another Church, but to create a different Church.”

How do we achieve this change?

We achieve this by not looking back at our warm and comforting memories of our Church in past decades.

We must face difficult choices. How do we identify what is possible in the short term, long term and in the response to COPT 26?

We may believe our personal desires as the answer to all problems. Desires which may shackle us to the past. Joyfully we should face the future with energy, faith in the Spirit and love for those who may not share our beliefs and hopes.

Who is to lead us in this movement of change?

We have a committed community, we have an active Parish Pastoral Council, we have parishioners working for the church in a great many unnoticed ways; we have our schools and their Chaplin; we have our Choir , organists and Musical Director; we have committed volunteers; cleaners, catechists, welcomers: we have our Parish Priest , Deacon and a Pastoral Assistant.

We have a beautiful Church and a Community Centre.

We live in a town with a strong commitment to Christian beliefs, but, overall, with ever decreasing congregations

We must all become, if able to give of some time, thought and energy, more of ourselves to our Church.

Using the words of President Kennedy

Ask not what your faith can do for you — ask what you can do for your faith

Paul Ripley

9 December 2021