

St. Anne's Preliminary Reaction to the Parish Synodal Questionnaire

General Response:

- 34 responses in total; 30 from regular mass attenders; 3 non mass attenders; 1 visitor

There were many positive comments describing our parish community *i.e.* as 'kind', 'friendly', 'dedicated' and 'generous'. However, from other responses it is also apparent that not everyone experiences our parish so positively. Some commented that we are still rather 'subdued' as we come out of COVID and others sensed divisions within the parish community that make it difficult to feel truly integrated. We thank you all for such an open and honest feedback and we sense that we have now a big opportunity to become more open-minded, welcoming and to overcome differences.

Is more involvement needed from all of the Parish?

'St. Annes' is full of good people, but many are not engaged with parish activities.' We wonder if there is an over-dependence of the parish community on the parish priest and the PCC members and a few parishioners. *Are we all clear about the necessary part we need to play? The parish needs us all!* Your comments suggested specific areas for actions:

Refresh the ministry of welcome

First let's thank all our welcomers & stewards.

- Trial of coffee & soft drinks in the back of the church after mass as an opportunity to better learn to know each other and our visitors, and to encourage a conversation.
- Could we all make an effort to speak to visitors and make them feel welcome?
- Introduce welcome cards for visitors.

- COVID has forced us all to socially distance; whilst still keeping safe; might we all reach out to fellow parishioners at mass with us!

Better communication between PCC and parish

Several comments indicated parish members would like to have greater transparency about the general affairs of the parish, but also of what is being discussed at parish council meetings and how decisions are being made. Some people for instance think Fr. Gerry makes too many decisions on his own without consulting the PCC or parish. We too want to be more visible and more transparent but need the contributions from all parish members. We suggest a few simple actions:

- Create a board with photos of PPC members and a short description that may help parish members to get in touch.
- We need to find more and easier channels for parish members to express their concerns or make suggestions, e.g. through an 'letter box' in church and /or links on the web-page.
- Agenda & PCC meeting minutes will be made available on the parish website again.

What needs to change

Our greatest concerns about the future are about our declining numbers, our aging congregation, and our inability to attract and retain young people. Our children's liturgy group has restarted, we have new leaders too and our first communion preparation has taken place over the last two years'

Could our whole congregation play a bigger part in welcoming and keeping our first communion families?

- Your most frequent suggestion was that the parish should link-up better with both our schools.
- Should we invite our head teachers to talk to us at mass each year?
- *Could a group of interested parishioners meet at school with staff, chaplain and students?*
- We are hoping to celebrate the sacrament of confirmation next year under the new leadership of Christian Fitzgerald. *How could we involve the hole parish community in this?*

Pastoral Care of the Elderly:

Currently we have about 20 parishioners who are part of our 'visitors group'. Also, our eucharistic ministers take holy Communion to the house bound. Unfortunately, some people have slipped through the net during the pandemic.

- Might a new 'Parish Census' improve our care?
- We need to rely on all parish members to keep us in touch with them.

Our role in the wider community

We expressed a deep commitment to our relationships with the wider community through the use of our parish centre, our membership in 'Churches together' in Buxton, through the 'Sunday Club', through our support of the foodbank (ZINK employability).

- Engage with the ZINK-project.
- Local pregnancy counselling service
- High Peak Night Shelter
- Should we invite 'Charis House' (on Hartwick Square, works with women & children affected by domestic abuse, homelessness or substance abuse)
- *How could we seek ways to be more involved more with civic life in Buxton?*

Respond to safeguarding and clerical abuse

We will enhance the profile of our parish representative and invite the Diocesan Advisor to come to mass and speak with us.

The Future of the Parish Centre

The majority of the questionnaires favoured the retention of our parish centre as a service to the local community. The diocesan officials have met with the proposed new centre management group and are in the process of clarifying roles and responsibilities. They have suggested the group working as a sub-committee of the parish pastoral council and being

responsible to them and the parish priest. Hopefully, this will be agreed and formalised in the near future.

The wider church (we will forward these suggestions to the Bishop's Conference)

In many responses the need for more drastic change within the church was expressed as a way forward to retain a lively church in the face of declining number of priests:

- The church needs to become much more inclusive and fully involve laity in decision processes.
- Married priests/women as priests & deacons should be considered and full representation of women on Diocesan and Vatican decision bodies.
- The church needs to prioritise urgent questions of environmental crisis, inequality & poverty within societies and between societies.
- The Church needs to dialogue better with our secular & scientific society to that we make a more plausible and convincing case for our Christian Faith.

(Nicola Barnes, Lesley Crowther, Thomas Langer, Mark McCabe, Fr Gerry, Yvonne Ripley, Katherine Scott, Margaret Swift)