



From Parish to Mission

Parish	St Joseph's, Wetherby
Parish Priest	Canon Nunan
Facilitators	Marie Baker, Paul Barry, Paul Lawe
Date of Meeting	24 November 2021
Number	26
Approx. Age Range	30 to 80.
I. The journeying companions	
As we journey together let us look around. Who are you on the journey with and what persons or groups are marginalised and why?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rituals can be obscure and put off people attending. • The rituals can draw people in; they are deep with mystery. x2 • Catechesis helps people to understand; this is what drew me in. x2 • Sometimes the ritual is just a ritual. • Is the Catholic Church marginalising others? • We would like to journey with everyone. • Marginalised don't all practice, and all who feel excluded because of personal circumstances (eg. divorced, disabled), we journey with as Church and the wider community. x3 • In our life time, we are journeying with 3 million less Catholics (in the UK). We are not journeying with the young people, and that is why we are seeing such a drop in attendances. • People think that exclusion from the Sacraments, eg for divorcees not allowed Holy Communion is hypocritical, exclusive. Younger people find this difficult to understand. 	
II. Listening	





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How might our local Church better listen to lay people (and especially young people and women) and minorities and those who are not respected?

- We need a framework that encourages input. x3
- Express people's needs - a means to do this. x2
- Framework should be Laity-led. The local church is more welcoming and inclusive. We have to see people as individuals. Outreach with social activities. x4
- Stop grouping people by sex or race – we are all equal.
- Spread the word; and respect the less respected!
- Try giving young people questionnaires to find out why they don't come to church (anonymously). Young people do not come to church. Young people often have their children baptised in order to get them into (*catholic*) schools.
- We need to speak young people's language more.
- Youth initiatives to encourage them back to church (Youth Groups).
- Make it all feel relevant and necessary to their lives and spiritual wellbeing / life. x2
- How does a Catholic family navigate in a real and supportive way, a child (their own) who is questioning their sexuality? Support is needed in parishes.
- There should be women, people of ethnic minorities, people of all ages in responsible roles in Diocese and Church hierarchy.
- Family life is where it starts, respect for girls / women etc.

III. Speaking out

How can everybody be encouraged to communicate appropriately what is important to them?

- 1. Tech for Coms; 2. Adapt; 3. Promote. (*This was expanded in open session at the end & paraphrased by ourselves as follows*). The church should be using technology to engage with more people in order to get the message across. Brand ourselves eg Hashtag St Josephs Wetherby; visible to our community. Set up WhatsApp groups. Then meetings such as this one can be broadcast to a much wider audience than just those attending church/reading bulletins. It's imperative that Social media Technology is introduced





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intelligently to improve communications with a wider audience. Including visual displays / communications to the community. Hence the adapting to new forms of technology, and improving/promoting our communication to others accordingly.

- In what respect? This is a very vague question and not related to anything. What are you asking for? Everybody will have a different idea. We cannot give an answer to this question.
- People need to feel they can say what they want / feel without being judged. This is currently not how it is perceived. Some people feel that their views might be condemned. Tolerance. Encouragement to come forward. Acceptance. x3
- We need 'Feedback' space on our website. But risk of confirmatory bias on the Internet.
- Need to accept variety of views. No mechanism in our parish. x2 No feedback loop to Diocese. x2
- Regular parish Forums led by Laity. Promote ownership of the parish by the laity; Social media platforms.

IV. Celebrating

How might I be better able to participate in Mass and other liturgies?

- I sometimes think the presentation of services and communication is very archaic. Music needs to move forward. It is the younger generation who are bored rigid with it.
- The church needs to be more aware of every individual's needs / circumstances / limitations (deaf, 'additional needs', language, minority groups). This would facilitate participation. x3
- The younger generation are excluded. They are not catered for. x2
- In evangelical churches there are age appropriate activities.
- Young adults don't see other young adults.
- Young people need to be in Leadership roles, eg Music. x2
- Youth 2000 draws people in.
- Those brought up as Catholics take their values into life even if they lapse. This is as important as going to Mass.





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- 'Break open' Mass by explanation at each step of Mass. Eg. Fr Stan. x2
- Inform ourselves to enrich the Liturgy.
- Give time to ourselves to prepare for Mass and Liturgies.
- Homilies more relevant to everyday life. x2
- Broaden range and style of liturgies.

V. Co-responsible in the mission

How can each Baptised person become a "missionary disciple", revealing Christ to others through their words and deeds?

- First and foremost, we need to live by example everyday – it's how we live, behave, treat people, accept others, etc – which will show we are 'missionary disciples'. x3
- We should know what we believe. We should be a lot more aware of the Teaching in Papal Encyclicals.
- If we are not confident in our belief, how can we explain it? Many Catholics learnt the 'penny' catechism at 8 yrs old, and then stopped.
- We don't talk about 'God is Love' enough. Deeds don't need explanation. x2
- Catholics have to do or be 'more'. The Holy Spirit works through Catholics and non-Catholics. The Kingdom of God is here now. x2
- Service, example, ecumenical, emphasis on deeds, visible Christian love.
- Non-judgmental, especially in our language.
- Be more open when attending church, verbally or online, socials.
- Invite more use of technology, more open. (*Refer back to bullet point 1 in Q3*)
- Are you asking this question because the Church is failing in its mission and you are looking for guidance from the congregation?

VI. Dialogue in Church and society





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How might we improve our conversations within our diocesan family and also outside of it, (for example with people of different faiths, those who have no faith and those who have particular roles and duties in society)?

- There is no diocesan dialogue. x2
- Churches Together is strong in Wetherby, but a small group. Scouts etc mingle across the town which is good. Less links with Muslims and the Jewish Faiths. x2
- Work together on inter-faith relations, eg shared activities for children. x2
- Take part in town life and prioritise participation in events and Mass times. eg . Remembrance Sunday. x2
- Shared confirmation teaching in Hamburg from different Christian faiths worked well.
- Other churches have family friendly environments – evangelical church.
- Encourage Diocese to engage with Parishes.
- Does the Diocese know what expertise is available within the Parishes?
- Do WE know what expertise we have within our own parish?
- Be more visible.
- To our knowledge we don't have any conversations, just a letter now and then. We should encourage activities with different faiths.
- These questions do not address the problems. The church was founded on simplicity and Love, and has lost its way.

VII. With the other Christian denominations

Are our relations with our Christian brothers and sisters good? How might they be improved?

- Be more welcoming and accommodating. x4
- Be more humble. x4
- We behave as separate Churches rather than collectively. x2
- Celebrate what we have in common rather than focussing on differences. x2
- Co-operate rather than compete! x2
- I don't think we compete. x2





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- Invite Visual as Church = +Socialise..... Group Texts and Letters (Part of use of IT comments).
- This parish has good relations with other Christian denominations. How can we go forward? I am not sure – the modern world has taken over.
- We need to reach outside ourselves. Do more with other churches, eg. visiting other denominations to understand their faith, (so much of what we believe we have in common). x2
- Are we afraid of evangelising? Other churches in our town are evangelising. We are lucky in Wetherby and should celebrate this, ie. Christmas Concert, Churches Together.
- Alpha in C o E is good.

VIII. Authority and participation

How might we develop teamwork and a sense of co-responsibility in our local Church?

- We do not have a parish community which is permanently driving and organising things – we just don't have it.
- Church currently works as an Authoritarian structure which is contrary to teamwork and co-responsibility. We need a more circular not hierarchical structure, particularly in light of declining number of priests. x2
- Given the growing lack of priests, Priests should be allowed to marry. x3+
- We should be inspiring young men – and women! – to become priests. (group discussion)
- Our church groups currently do not 'network' - we should. This might be the start of better teamwork and sharing. x5
- Best Practices: Why don't we go and see what is happening in those churches where things work well? Instead we are always trying to re-invent the wheel. We waste energy when all we need to do is look and consult with others as to how things work well in their own church places. (group discussion)
- We need to socialise more, without any reason as such. x2
- Coffee mornings to reach out to the marginalised.





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- Toddler group run by Methodist/Anglican/Baptist churches with volunteers carrying out activities based on Bible Stories.
- We need a 'bottom-up' Parish and Diocese. Clergy should be more pastoral and facilitatory rather than 'leaders'.
- Implement Vatican II.
- Broad involvement.
- More of this type of engagement such as tonight's meeting!! x2
- 'WhatsApp' group / Facebook Group / Hashtag names / Social media / Group names....
(church groups is what I think is intended here.) x2

IX. Discerning and deciding

How might we improve the process of decision-making in our local Church, so that we truly listen and recognise that the Holy Spirit can speak through each one of us?

- Encourage young people to get involved and to share their views. Sadly, there is not a good representation of all ages in church. How about a Mass at 3pm in the afternoon for young couples and families and see how many come? x2
- Give clarity first of all on how decisions are made – currently it's a one-way process – “we are told”. There needs to be more equality. Young people, women, elderly all need to be listened to.
- Vary Mass times; they are set up for retired people.
- Decisions are made by the priest. Need a group with individual leadership in different areas of parish life.
- Concern about 'cliques' being set up and taking over.
- Understand about your gifts and talents to give appropriately.
- 'Called and gifted' – Fr Hall, Bradford.
- Clergy need to recognise Laity have lots to offer.
- Widen decision-making processes to involve everyone.
- We (the people) are the Church.
- Catch people after Mass.





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- Do not be afraid to target people.

X. Forming ourselves in synodality

What formation is necessary within the local Church if we are to become better at listening to one another and sharing our insights with one another?

- A 'Holy Spirit' led 'open session', fairly regularly, for parishioners to come together to talk, pray, share insights and thoughts comfortably without judgment. x2
- Sycamore and something to help it continue.
- Book club over Lent, helped different people to come together.
- Don't use jargon. Is the church an institution with its own language? We need help to understand the language. x2
- Different initiatives and socialising needed. x2
- An 18 – 35 Group Facebook for the parish?
- Need times and places specifically to come and listen to each other.
- Never mind the local church; it has to come from the very top. More women need to be involved in every aspect of church life.

Additional Note: This note was type-written and handed over by an elderly parishioner with request that it should be included in the submissions. He was not precious about where it was inserted into the responses, so long as his words were forwarded.

- A. The catholic population of England peaked at 4.5 million in 1993.
- B. In 2020, our numbers stood at 1.42 million.
- C. Weekly mass attendances have fallen by nearly 1/3rd between 1993 and 2010.
- D. A 2014 survey showed nearly 50% of Mass attendees are over 65.
- E. Only 17% of cradle catholics attend weekly Mass.
- F. Catholic marriages as a total of all marriages have declined from 13% in 1962 to 4.3% in 2010.
- G. Priest numbers peaked at 7,887 in 1965 but have been falling ever since and in 2011 totalled 5,264.
- H. The above numbers suggest that our church is in decline and in another 15 or 20 years time we will have very small Mass attendees and very few priests.





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Do I presume that the questionnaire is being done to organise local churches to prepare for the day when we don't have any priests to say weekly Mass and very few people who wish to attend?? In other words we are getting the lifeboats ready for the inevitable, or are we 'just re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic'?



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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH WETHERBY

VISION STATEMENT

What is our calling? What is our Mission? What are we sent to do?

We are baptised into Christ. We are part of the Church which Christ founded to continue his Mission. Our Mission is the Mission of Jesus.

What is the Mission of Jesus?

His Mission was to proclaim the Reign of God. The reign of God is an invitation to a new way of life, an invitation to a new way of **seeing, judging, and acting**. Jesus had a dream for our world, he dreamt that life on earth would mirror life in heaven. The **Good News** is that there is another way.

Instead of war and conflict,
Jesus spoke of living together as brothers and sisters in the Family of God.

Instead of bitterness and retaliation,
Jesus spoke of a love that refuses to be poisoned
a love which makes one pray for the oppressor.

Instead of famine, poverty and greed,
Jesus spoke of care and practical concern.

Instead of darkness and sin,
Jesus willed that all life would reflect the light of Heaven.
He prayed that the will of the Father would be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

'Thy Kingdom come'

We are called to make God's Kingdom a reality in our Parish
We are called to be builders of the Kingdom.
The Kingdom is about healing, forgiveness and reconciliation
We are called to build **Community, Communion and Connectedness**
We are called to be expansive and inclusive
not narrow and elitist.

Why do we exist as a Parish?

We exist to evangelise and to proclaim the Good News of.....
Jesus and the Kingdom,

The Person and the Message,
Love and forgiveness.
Each one of us is called to continue the Mission of Jesus.

How do we begin?

We begin where Jesus began, by being in a personal relationship with the Father through prayer and reflection on the Scriptures.
Like Jesus we have to be in touch with ordinary people, their problems, their pressures, and be able to speak in a language which they understand.

We are called to be Church in a time of great change.

People are seriously searching. Sadly many think the Church irrelevant to their lives and their struggles, often because of the language we use. We must be in touch if we are to be relevant. We are the Church for our time. There is no future in the past!

What must we do as we plan our Mission for our time?

- Listen to people with respect and respond in a language which they understand.
- Plan ministries which address real life needs.
- Establish more ongoing formation and Faith sharing groups.
- More prayer groups.
- Create small groups where the riches of the Scriptures, can be connected with people's life experience.
- Provide meaningful liturgical experiences.
- Enable people to discern the gifts which God has already given them and invite them to use those gifts for the local Community.

The Eucharist is at the centre of the Parish

We gather every Sunday to Worship our God,
to be sustained by the Word and Holy Communion
At the end of every Mass each of us is sent on Mission.
'The Mass is ended, go in peace, to love and serve the Lord'

We need a Vision Statement:

To progress as a Parish Community, we must be clear about our Mission, and clear about how we are going to achieve it.
The Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Scriptures states...
'Without vision, people perish'
Our Vision Statement will answer the question.....
Who or what are we trying to become as we work together?
When we have established who we are and what we are called to become, then we look at the various areas of ministry in the Parish.....
Evangelisation, Catechesis, Worship, Pastoral Care etc.
Each group in Ministry should have a five year plan which should be revisited regularly to see if goals are being met.

We must move from Maintenance to Mission.

We must not be narrow in our thinking,

we must always remember that we are part of the whole Church.
A Parish Leadership Team is necessary.

Parish Leadership Team:

The purpose of the team is

- to work with the Parish Clergy in leadership,
- to plan and to promote our vision for St. Joseph's,
- to assess our strengths and weaknesses as we carry out our Mission,
- to plan for the future in the light of this assessment.

The Parish Leadership Team is to give expression to the truth that, all parishioners, by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, share responsibility for the wellbeing, running and future of the Parish Community

The function of the Parish Priest is to empower, enable, and be a focus of unity in the Parish. Collaborative Ministry is the way forward. Planning is about rethinking. It is more than making plans. It is learning to think in a

Mission/Planning/Collaborative mode.

Pastoral Planning must be prayer centred.

Every planning meeting should begin with 15 to 20 minutes prayer.

Decision making is about discernment and consensus, and not about voting and winning! The gifts of all should be acknowledged and encouraged.

The Wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit should be sought in all matters of planning.

You will have noticed that I am talking in terms of a Parish Leadership, rather than a Parish Council. This is quite deliberate. Councils have overtones of politics and power. They say that the devil has his own seat on parish councils, where he does what he does best, causes confusion, division and introspection. We do not need that.

We are called to discernment, unity, service and mission.

It is only with the help of God that we can achieve together what God has called us to do. Please pray that we will be what Jesus has called us to be - His Body, His Presence in this area,

John F. Nunan
Parish Priest.