

## **Walking Together – Diocese of Plymouth Synodal Journey**

### **Summary - Parish of the Holy Spirit, Bovey Tracey**

During Advent parishioners were invited to join with the Diocese in the Synodal journey. All parishioners were invited to attend meetings and if unable to do so, to take home the weekly theme documents with accompanying summary form. Unfortunately the take up was not as large as we hoped with only ten parishioners submitting a written response and five attending the meetings. What follows is a summary of the views expressed at meetings and from the written responses received.

#### **Listening**

##### **1: What has your faith meant to you these past 18 months living with Covid?**

Their faith was important to all those who responded. For some it was their bedrock, saviour and comfort. For others it offered the opportunity for helping others, for reflection, listening and prayer.

##### **2: How do I listen to God? How do I listen to others?**

Many listened to God when talking to him – through prayer and at Mass. Some felt it was important to make time to listen to others, especially minorities. It was regretted that Adoration was no longer available to parishioners.

##### **3: How does our parish listen to others? How do we as a church listen to God?**

Mixed views. Some thought that the parish is open and welcoming and will listen to others. Others felt there was more to be done – need to reach out to the youth and to minorities. There was a recognition that the vast majority of the parish are retirees and that it needs to be more open in its communication.

##### **4: How do we as a Church listen to others? How do we as a Church listen to those outside the Church?**

On the whole the views were negative. Doubts emerged over whether the Synod would influence practice, and some of the hierarchy were seen to be self-serving. It needed to be more open to listening to others both inside and outside the Church. More care needs to be taken with the use of language.

#### **Mission**

##### **1: What is my mission?**

On the whole a positive response – be guided by the Beatitudes, show tolerance, perseverance, kindness and compassion. Whilst some recognised their role in evangelisation others felt uncomfortable or ill equipped to talk about faith.

## **2: What is the mission of our parish community?**

Many positive views expressed:

- To be loving towards everyone and to be open to all who want to know about God and/or our faith
- To support our community and the wider community with whatever means we have
- To demonstrate to the secular community in which we live, the values seen in Jesus' life which alone gives ultimate meaning to life. To let those values underpin all we undertake in practical service, and to make clear that they are rooted in our worship, sacrament and spiritual life

Others recognise the need for a proactive stance:

- A lot could be done in the parish to spread the gospel and express to others what our faith means. Work with housebound, homeless
- Need to look at what happens in other parishes, poss larger parishes. Nothing for younger people in the parish. We don't reach out to them. Why?

## **3: What is the mission of the whole church?**

The positive role by Pope Francis was recognised. A more local view was also taken.

- In every social interaction with the wider community to let the joy which emanates from Christ's life have free rein in all we do so that non-believers recognise a treasure in which they would like to share
- To help those that need it the most and follow the example of those who work quietly without trying to draw attention to themselves

More negative views were also expressed. The damage caused by the sexual abuse scandals was recognised. A perceived lack of leadership from elderly parish priests.

## **Celebrate**

### **1: How do I celebrate the presence of God in His Word in the Sacraments?**

Mass was central to this answer. Other means included bible reading, prayer and being joyful.

### **2: How does our parish celebrate the Word and the Sacraments?**

Reflection seemed solely on attending Mass and coming together in faith and joyfulness. Concern was expressed that there was no Adoration, that Confession was not readily available and there was nothing for the disabled in parish groups.

### **3: How does the wider Church celebrate journeying together?**

The wider mission of the Church was not recognised. Responses confined to the local Church.

## Dream

### **1: What is God's dream for me? How am I called to serve? How might I reach out to others and share the faith?**

Many positive answers to what is God's dream for me and how I am called to serve. Very little about how I might reach out to others and share the faith.

### **2: What is God's dream for us/our parish? How might our parish "walk better together"? How might our pastoral provision look in the future?**

Clear recognition that the parish has much to do. There were some positive suggestions – need to go out and be more involved in the community – leave church open more frequently – groups to meet to reflect on the faith – everyone be given the chance to speak and to reflect – encourage young people to come to Church – recognition of need for good leadership and structure to get things in place.

There was recognition that the current situation is difficult.

- It is difficult to see a future for our parish at present. Our priest is elderly and infirm and unable to carry out many pastoral duties. There seems to be an unwillingness on the part of the majority of parishioners to take part in activities and help around the church, apart from a very few people who fulfil all the roles to the best of their abilities

### **3: What is God's dream for the wider Church/world? What fruits can the wider Church draw from this "journeying together"?**

As few answered, those that did were mainly positive.

- That there will be a better balance among all
- God's dream would be to strengthen our faith, promote God's love and commandments
- To spread the Gospel. To do all we can to help others
- Be an active/proactive church. Being a listening church is not enough. It needs to respond more vigorously as it is perceived by many to just wring its hands in despair and observe rather than react

## Summary

### **1: In the light of the last 18 months living with Covid and your reflections on the four themes, what are you most looking for from the parish moving forward?**

- To attract more youth and families to come to church
- To be more open/welcoming to one another, encouraging sharing our stories, our ideas and hopes
- Church open outside of mass times
- Learning more about our faith. Sharing our experiences
- Thinking of ways we could be more open towards those of other denominations
- How to give the Holy Spirit church a bigger profile in the town
- To continue being a close community, supporting each other and our parish priest
- To look at wider issues such as Live Simply. Stronger promotion of the charities we support such as foodbank, shoebox appeal etc. Can we get local community involved?

**2: In the light of the last 18 months living with Covid and your reflections on the four themes, what are you most looking for from the Church/Diocese moving forward?**

- The church has embraced social media facilities to help during the pandemic, not just diocese but internationally. It is imperative that such facilities be maintained and expanded using social platforms to reach out to a 21<sup>st</sup> century population
  - Look to seeing the church seriously consider confining celibacy to history. Many married CofE clergy were welcomed when they celebrated mass
  - Make the church fit for purpose for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It still feels stuffy and antiquated to many
- Small clusters of parishes to get together and share good practice on themes such as
  - making our churches more open to all
  - nurturing younger members of the church, giving them roles
  - newcomers, bringing in, getting involved
  - courses – nurturing/growing our faith. Sharing our faith
- To give firm leadership, to show God's love to everyone
- Genuine love and fellowship
- Change the way in which priests, both men and women, are trained. All should have other work experience for at least 3 years before starting training. Laity are an integral part of the parish and diocese and could be trained to officiate at liturgies. Open to ecumenism. To welcome all.