

# **REPORT ON SACRED HEART PARISH AUDIT**

**By Philippa Smallwood**

## **Introduction**

The Parish Audit document was produced by the Diocese to help parishes assess their current situation in preparation for considering the diocesan document *The Precious Place of God's Grace*. All parishioners were given the opportunity to complete a Parish Audit document and thank you very much to those who did so. This was followed by discussion of the Parish Audit document which had to be conducted via a number of Zoom sessions due to the COVID pandemic. The sessions were open to all parishioners and the number of attendees varied from a minimum of 16 to a maximum of 25. The discussion was wide ranging and was not confined to the scope of the questions posed in the audit document. Thanks to those parishioners who contributed, to Fr Kieran who chaired and to Martin Overy who organised the Zoom sessions.

## **Key Matters Arising**

It is clear that the Parish does well in many areas but the main focus of this document is to highlight those areas requiring improvement. As the discussion was very detailed at times, it would require a huge report to describe all contributions: this is a summary of the key issues which arose.

- The need to build a strong sense of community amongst all parishioners
- Increase the number of parishioners involved in more than attending mass, providing opportunities for personal growth in skills as well as faith
- Engage with and provide more for the younger parishioners, including teenagers (for which there is some provision) as well as young to middle aged adults for which there is nothing specific at the moment - consider fostering links with Cath Soc at the University and Youth Alpha
- Attract/ retain more young people and enable them to contribute in a way that appeals to them eg social action, charity work, volunteering
- Many people do great things in the Parish but much of it is not known about by the majority. This hinders those who may wish to be involved and could lead to duplication of effort
- Educate parishioners in their faith, such as with visiting speakers, offering ALPHA courses and learning about and joining in Catholic Social Action. This can also have an ecumenical dimension
- Provide sustainable religious instruction programmes following Confirmation and RCIA
- The need for formal discussion of Church documents in sermons as well as discussion in other ways eg use a book group model so no need for lots of individual work to prepare lectures
- Supporting parishioners, especially the sick and elderly
- Helping parishioners and others in the wider community who need it both materially and spiritually, how to identify them and provide awareness that help is available
- All parishioners use every opportunity to evangelise
- Involvement with other faiths in Exeter eg CTaX (Christians together across Exeter), joint services, joint charity work
- Improve the Parish presence online and on social media, including keeping an up-to-date website and Facebook page and regularly updating our input on other sites, as well as on other social media platforms to engage with the young
- Improve the dissemination of information to parishioners eg by inviting people from different groups to speak from the pulpit about what they are doing
- Ask for specific help with specific projects to engage more of the congregation
- How to draw Parish members back after the pandemic - consult parishioners on preferred weekday mass times, offer a range of weekday mass times across the 2 Exeter parishes
- Have an online yearly calendar for diocesan and Catholic Exeter events so parishioners have plenty of warning of what is coming up and are not solely reliant on newsletters, and clashes can be avoided
- Highlight and encourage Parish support for the disadvantaged eg, Urafiki, Exeter Foodbank, YMCA build for the homeless, Exeter Waymakers resettling refugees

- Share Parish facilities with community groups - may provide evangelisation opportunities
- Encourage parishioners to be active and speak up with a Christian voice where there is injustice at national and local level - the newsletter highlights national issues but not local ones.
- Support our clergy so they are not isolated
- Does more need to be done to ask forgiveness for clerical abuse
- Know the expertise/skills parishioners have so they can help with decision making and avoid the same people/cliques doing everything - increase the talent pool
- Need to establish a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC)
- PPC will facilitate, amongst other things, greater transparency of decision making and accountability in the Parish
- Harness Catholic Exeter in decision making
- Consider how best to use the church building, the new Parish community space and St Nicholas school hall in an all encompassing way
- Develop models of how to share leadership and foster team responsibility in various Parish groups/teams similar to that operating in the music group. This will provide flexibility, eg if someone is unable to carry out their role, another can easily step in at the last minute

### **Immediate Actions**

- Give out plastic mass response cards
- Encourage those in the congregation who are interested to use the Universalis website to follow the words during mass - available free at <https://www.universalis.com/>. There is also an app which requires a subscription
- Live stream masses
- Provide information in the newsletter about youth activities run by the Catholic Exeter Youth Worker, Eric
- Publish a Parish Directory on the website, and a paper version on the noticeboard
- Include CTaX information on the Parish website
- Invite visiting speakers to talk from the pulpit: Cecilia Browning to invite YMCA to talk about their building project and how to donate
- Promote Catholic Exeter and advertise masses at both churches on the website.
- Establish a PPC - in progress, with Philippa Smallwood as Chair
- Do a short survey of parishioners to identify their interests and skills - Brian Bargent to produce survey

It is gratifying to note that a number of the above actions have already taken place or are works in progress

### **Long Term Actions**

- Provide screens in church on which the words of the mass are projected so all the congregation can join in with the responses. Project the text of sermons also, to aid those who are hard of hearing. Ariel is the best font for those with sight problems, although they may need large print mass cards and hymn books
- Have special masses for young people which they have organised and are involved in
- Have a library at the back of church for adults and children
- Have a Parish family event which will appeal to all ages, including teens
- Young adults (>20yrs) to set up a group for themselves, with support if required
- Have an International Mass as soon as possible- Vivianne Anderson to coordinate, with help
- Produce a spiritual development plan
- Reassess and develop the welcome offered to people attending church
- Identify social action opportunities and involve the young in this
- Produce "Frequently Asked Questions" on the website answering basic faith questions
- Include the catechism on the website which is easily searchable and indexed
- The Catholic Exeter website is to be developed, shared across the Exeter parishes, as well as a shared newsletter
- Involve others in the congregation, not just the same people doing everything
- Look at Catholic social teaching and establish the means of discussing encyclicals etc

- Have a regular, focussed Parish effort to do something in Lent and at other times
- Develop the Presbytery garden into a more attractive, useful space: Dorf Ruscoe to help with this
- Environmentally friendly heating system for the church
- Clean stonework around the altar

### **Next Step**

**Attend an online 2 part presentation on Saturday 1st May organised by the Diocese. Please note, YOU NEED TO REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT ONLINE** via the link

**<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-precious-place-of-gods-grace-michael-dopp-on-missionary-parishes-tickets-145433789379?utm-medium=discovery&utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&aff=escb&utm-source=cp&utm-term=listing>**