



# Seeking **Christ** **TOGETHER**

Summary of the Parish  
Member Engagement Survey  
Results (February 2020)

**Our Lady of Lourdes,  
Harpenden**

May 2021

As a parish community we are on a journey: 'Seeking Christ Together'. In February, last year, we issued the 'Parish Engagement Survey' to try to gain a better understanding of the needs of our parish, and of our parishioners.

<Video of Father Anthony>

You don't need me to tell you that a lot has happened in the past year!

Our lives have been overshadowed by the impact of the Pandemic, and with all that that has asked of us, from lockdowns to home-schooling, and closed churches to worries about job security. But that is not all that has been happening. During this time, a small group, consisting of Dennis Cooper, Alison Fox, Dominique Pesez, and myself have been analysing your responses. These speak of what you like in our parish, what you find helpful, as well as what needs to be introduced, and could be done better. In short, they give us a path to the future. Of course, since the survey was completed, we have been living with the impact of Covid 19, and there will also be lessons, for all of us, to learn from this.

Here and now I am glad to be able to share the responses to the survey, which, I hope, provide us with some essential signs of what we need to do, if we are to become a parish of missionary disciples

- The goal of the Parish Member Engagement Survey was to create opportunities for every member of the parish, to expand the Kingdom of God in our parish for yourself and those around you.
- It starts with you having an exceptional parish experience that will empower you to own your calling.
- Through this Parish Member Engagement Survey we wanted to hear about your parish experience.

## BACKGROUND



Through our Baptism each one of us becomes a part of God's family, each one of us is called to be a missionary disciple.

The goal of the Parish Member Engagement Survey was to begin to create opportunities for every member of the parish, to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, and then to actively play their part in expanding the Kingdom of God in our lives, in our parish, and in the lives of those around us.

Such a way of life grows out of having a positive parish experience, that will provide the confidence to live your call to discipleship.

The Parish Member Engagement Survey has provided us with important knowledge, your experience of our parish.

## PARISH VISION

To become a **welcoming, active and outgoing** Parish community which **recognises and benefits** from our **God given gifts and talents**, **empowering** each one of us to individually and collectively **spread the Good News** to others, whilst **deepening our own relationship with Christ** our brother, irrespective of the point we are at on our journey.

We started with a vision:

Our hope is to become a parish of missionary disciples. We will do that by striving:

“To become a **welcoming, active and outgoing** Parish community which **recognises and benefits** from our **God given gifts and talents**, **empowering** each one of us to individually and collectively **spread the Good News** to others, whilst **deepening our own relationship with Christ** our brother, irrespective of the point we are at on our journey.”

- Recap of the Parish Member Engagement Survey 2020
- Summary of the Survey results
- Outcomes: visions and goals for our parish
- Next steps

## AGENDA

Now we would like to present you with the results of the survey and how we plan to journey towards achieving that vision.

During this presentation we will:

- Provide a recap of the Parish Member Engagement Survey
- Give you a summary of the results
- Set out the goals for our parish that emerged from the results of the survey
- And present the immediate next steps

## AGENDA

- Recap of the Parish Member Engagement Survey 2020
- Summary of the Survey results
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The survey covered 4 areas:

- Member Engagement
- Spiritual Commitment
- Outcomes
- Demographics

Age Group	Gender	Marital Status	Frequency of Attendance	Level of Engagement	Level of Spiritual Commitment	Outcomes
18-24	Male	Single	Weekly	High	High	Increased participation in parish activities
25-34	Female	Married	Weekly	Medium	Medium	Seeking more opportunities for spiritual growth
35-44	Male	Married	Weekly	High	High	Desire for more community support
45-54	Female	Married	Weekly	Medium	Medium	Interested in more outreach programs
55-64	Male	Married	Weekly	High	High	Value the sacraments and liturgy
65+	Female	Widowed	Weekly	Medium	Medium	Need for more social and support services



As you will recall our Parish Member Engagement Survey covered 4 areas:

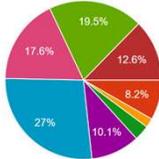
- Member Engagement - to gain an understanding how people engage with the parish
- Spiritual Commitment - to help us all to understand our relationship with God and how we as a parish can nourish that relationship
- Outcomes – to understand what hopes people have for the parish now and in the future
- Demographics – to gather information about who responded to the survey to aid the analysis of the results

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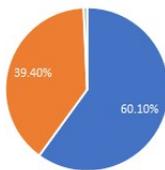
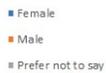
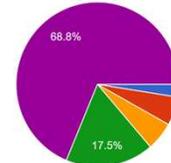
## DEMOGRAPHICS

Total Number of Responses Received: 161



Responses were received from all age groups  
Most responses from 45-54 year olds  
Fewest responses from 19-24 year olds

The majority of people who responded had been in the parish more than 10 years



Females were greater responders than males

UK was the dominant country of origin followed by Ireland

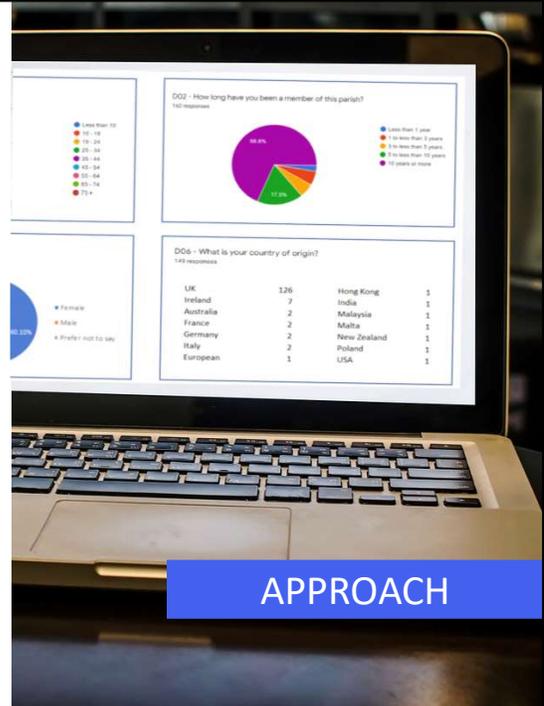
UK	126	Hong Kong	1
Ireland	7	India	1
Australia	2	Malaysia	1
France	2	Malta	1
Germany	2	New Zealand	1
Italy	2	Poland	1
European	1	USA	1

In total we received 161 responses representing all ages groups, with the 45-54s being most widely represented at over a quarter of all respondents, and the 19–24-year-olds the least represented.

The majority of respondents had been members of the parish for at least 10 years, but even parishioners who had been with us less than a year took part.

Females were greater responders than men and the UK was the dominant country of origin, followed by Ireland.

- Each question was classified based on whether people responded positively or negatively, using Red-Amber-Green indicators, and cross-referenced with demographic data.
- All the comments were reviewed and the key themes extracted to develop visions and goals.
- All the suggestions and ideas were fed into the formation of a roadmap.



APPROACH

The first part of the survey consisted of quantitative questions where respondents were asked to respond to a series of statements with answers ranging from “Strongly Agree” down to “Strongly Disagree”, with the opportunity to supplement these with comments.

In addition there were 4 open questions that required a written answer.

We analysed the responses to the statements and classified them using a red-amber-green traffic-light system to indicate whether the majority of people responded positively, negatively, or were unsure to each statement.

Every comment, suggestion and idea received in the survey was read and categorised and the key themes were used to develop the goals we will present later.

All of the ideas and suggestions received in the comments have also been fed into the formation of an initial roadmap of actions, some of which we will share with you at the end.

## OVERALL SURVEY RESULTS

Figures in brackets show the % of respondents who gave the answer shown in the column heading

STRONGLY AGREED OR AGREED		NEITHER	DISAGREED OR STRONGLY DISAGREED	
More than 65% agreed or strongly agreed	Majority agreed or strongly agreed	Majority neither agreed nor disagreed	Majority disagreed or strongly disagreed	More than 65% disagreed or strongly disagreed
In my parish my spiritual needs are met (81%)	In my parish I regularly have an opportunity to use my talent (60%)	I would like to be more involved in parish activities (45%)	In the last 6 months, I have benefited from a conversation with someone in my parish about my spiritual growth (38%)	I usually say grace before meals (66%)
I feel the parish values my contribution to its life (71%)	In the last month, I have received recognition or praise from someone in my parish (51%)		I pray with my family whenever I can (44.2%)	In the last month, I have invited someone to participate within my parish (70%)
I feel encouraged by other parishioners who share my commitment to spiritual growth (69%)	There are opportunities in my parish which teach me how to pray (64%)			
I have made friends through sharing the life of the parish (80%)	As a member of my parish my opinions seem to count (53%)			
In my parish, I have opportunities to learn and grow (77%)	I would like to know more about the different groups within our parish (60%)			
I feel welcome and valued in our parish (85%)	I would like more opportunities for learning about my faith (65%)			
Because of my faith I have meaning and purpose in my life (84%)	I spend time in worship and prayer every day (57%)			
My faith has called me to develop my given strength (72%)	My faith is involved in every part of my life (61%)			
I take unpopular stands to defend my faith (68%)	My faith has called me to get involved in parish activities (65%)			
My faith gives me an inner peace (85%)	Because of my faith I have forgiven people who have hurt me deeply (62%)			
I speak words of kindness to those in need encouragement (94%)	I need help developing my understanding of my faith (58%)			
I am a person who is spiritually committed (76%)				

This chart shows the outcome of analysis of quantitative questions. The leftmost columns in green show the statements where the majority of people responded with Agree or Strongly Agree. The right most columns in orange and red represent the statements where the majority of people responded Disagree or Strongly Disagree. The figures in brackets show the percentage of people who responded as per the column headings for each statement.

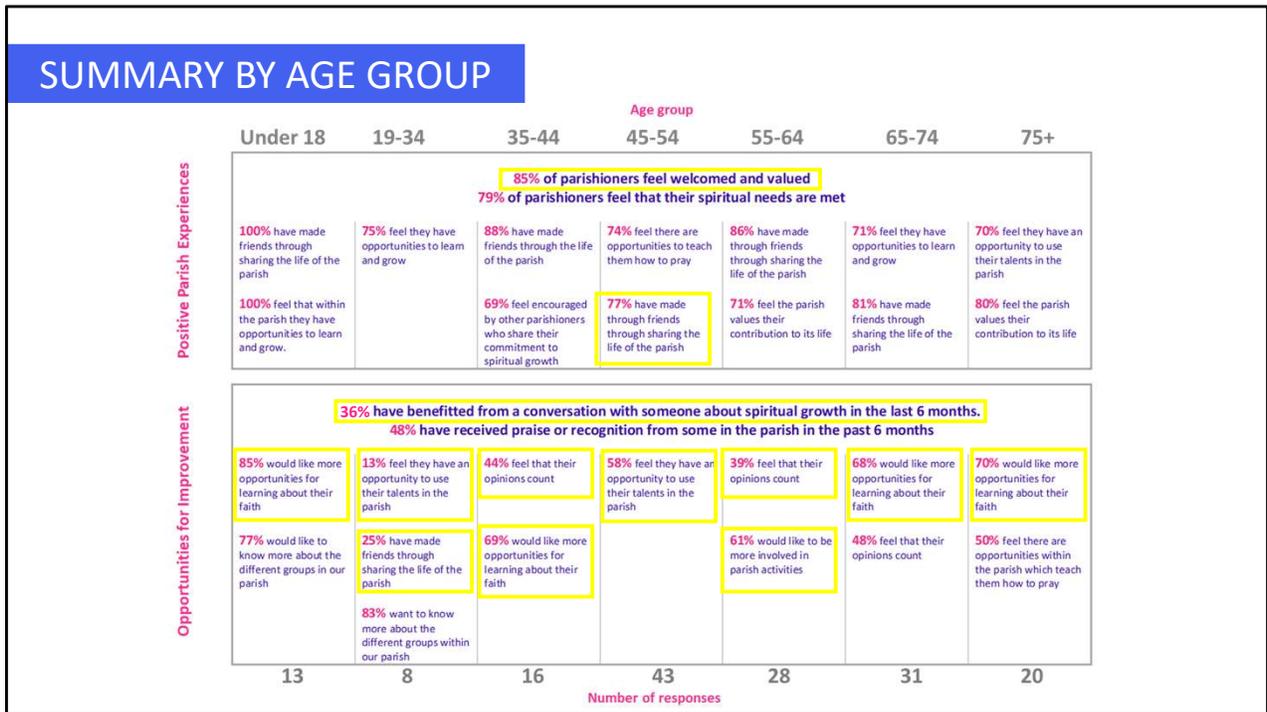
Overall, as you can see the results were very positive.

If you want to look at this in detail you can download a copy from the parish website, but to highlight a few points:

On the positive side 81% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their spiritual needs were being met by the parish, with the majority of respondents also agreeing that they feel valued and encouraged, that they have made friends through the parish, they have opportunities to learn and grow, and they feel spiritually committed. Three-fifths of respondents also agreed that they had opportunities to use their talents in the parish.

A smaller number, but still a majority of 53% of respondents agreed that their opinions counted within the parish. This compared to 10% who said they did not and 37% who were not sure.

On the negative side 70% said they had not invited anyone to participate in the parish in the previous month, and 38% of respondents disagreed with the statement that they had benefited from a conversation with someone in the parish about their spiritual growth in the previous 6 months. Only 36% of people agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and 25% of respondents were not sure.



This chart now shows the responses to some of those same statements by age and again you can find a copy of this on the parish website to look at in more detail.

The top box represents positive parish experiences, and the bottom box represents opportunities for improvement. The bold headlines that span across the age groups represent statements where the responses were similar across all age groups. So for example, across the board 85% of parishioners feel valued and welcome and only 36% had benefitted from a conversation with someone about spiritual growth in the previous 6 months.

Looking at some of the age specifics we can see that most parishioners felt they had made friends through the parish in every age group except the 19 to 34s, where only 25% said this was the case. And only 13% of that age group felt they had a chance to use their talents in the parish.

The biggest desire to learn more about our faith came from the under 18s, the 35-44 year olds, and the older parishioners.

Only 44% of 35 to 44 year olds and 39% of 55 to 64 year olds felt that their opinions

count in the parish.

The 55 to 64 year olds were the group that most wanted opportunities to be more involved in parish activities, with 61% agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement.

For the 45 to 54 year olds 77% said they had made friends through sharing the life of the parish, but only 58% felt they had an opportunity to use their talents.

These differences across the age groups highlight that as we begin to make improvements within the parish we need to be mindful that the needs of our parishioners vary.

## WHAT YOU LIKE MOST...

**“From your perspective, what are the three elements that you like most about OLoL parish?”**



To illustrate the responses to the open questions in the survey we have taken all of the comments and created a word cloud. The larger the type size the more frequently the word appeared in the responses.

This first cloud represents the responses to the question asking what people liked most about the parish.

Just picking out three, people felt that we are a: -

Friendly Parish

And a welcoming church

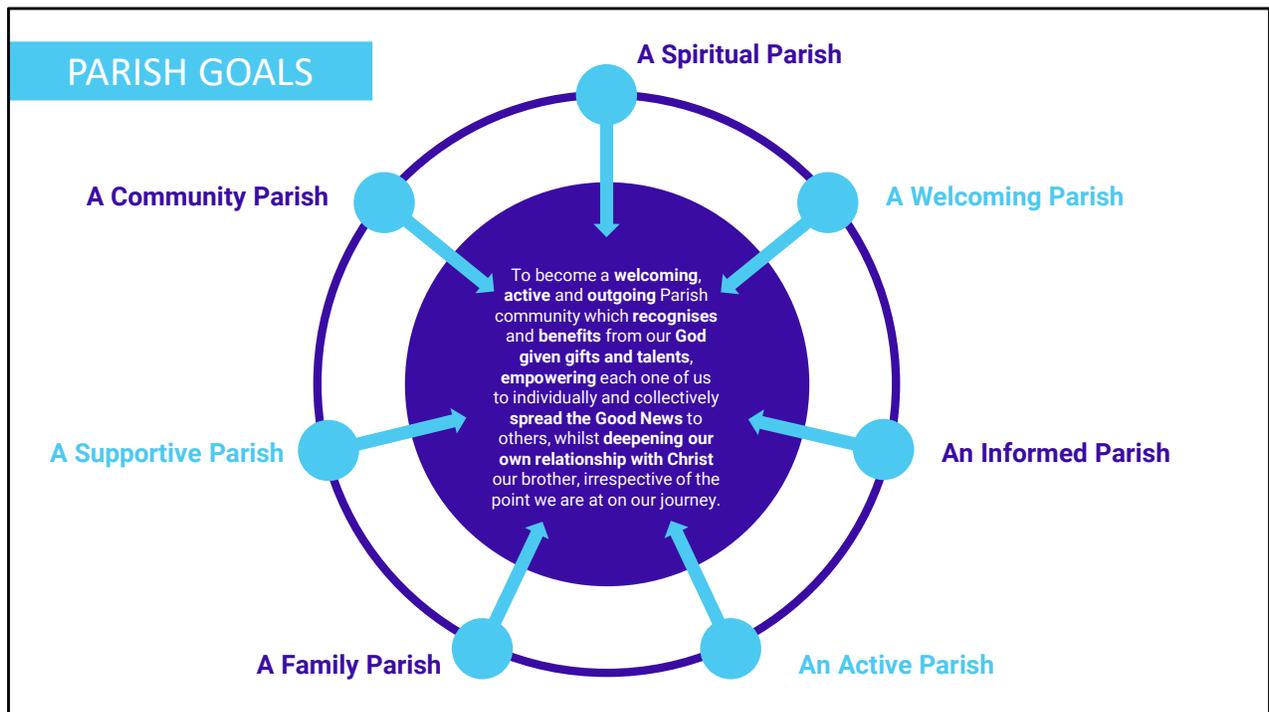
With a great Choir!



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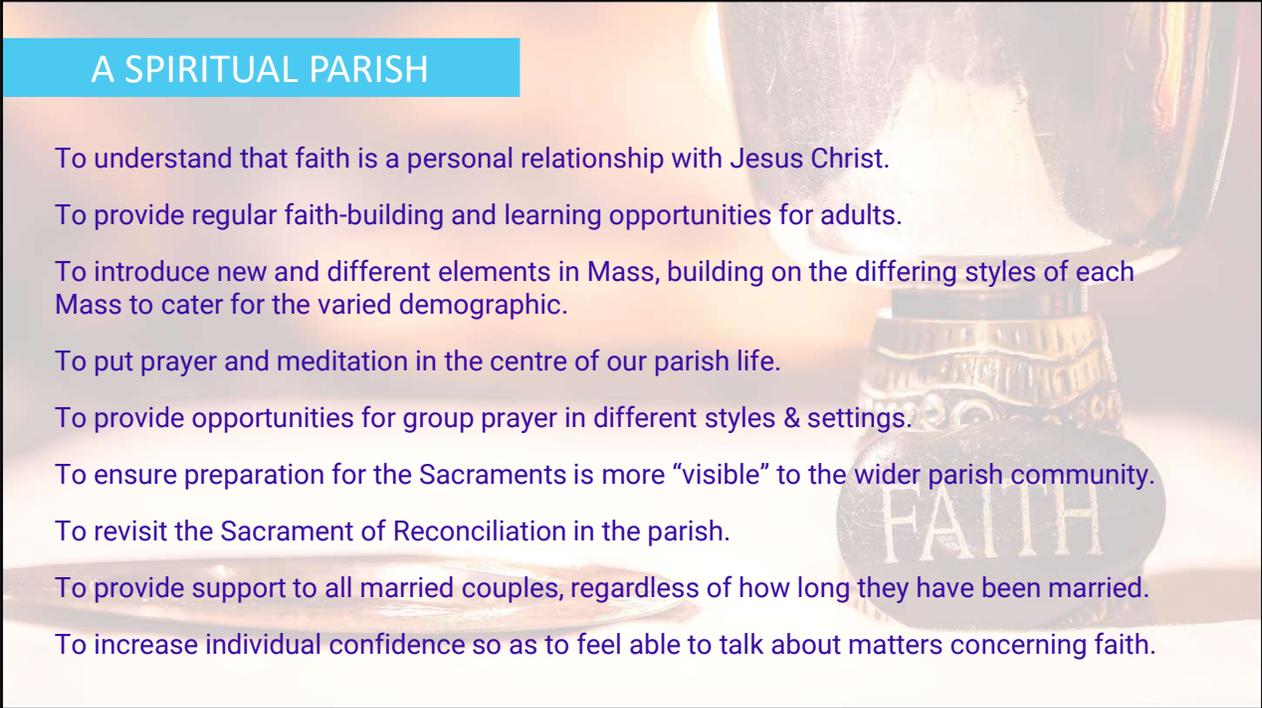




As mentioned earlier every comment, suggestion and idea received in the survey was read and categorised. This feedback was then turned into goals and organised into 7 key strategic areas that support the parish vision.

We want to be

- A Spiritual Parish
- A Welcoming Parish
- An Informed Parish
- An Active Parish
- A Family Parish
- A Supportive Parish
- A Community Parish



## A SPIRITUAL PARISH

- To understand that faith is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- To provide regular faith-building and learning opportunities for adults.
- To introduce new and different elements in Mass, building on the differing styles of each Mass to cater for the varied demographic.
- To put prayer and meditation in the centre of our parish life.
- To provide opportunities for group prayer in different styles & settings.
- To ensure preparation for the Sacraments is more “visible” to the wider parish community.
- To revisit the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the parish.
- To provide support to all married couples, regardless of how long they have been married.
- To increase individual confidence so as to feel able to talk about matters concerning faith.

One of the positives from the survey was that 81% of respondents said they felt that their spiritual needs were met by the parish. However there is always room for improvement, and it was very clear from the written responses that there is a desire for more opportunities for spiritual nourishment within the parish, and that where opportunities do exist already they are perhaps not in the right format, or at the right time, or not communicated adequately to meet everyone’s needs. Therefore, our goals to become a more Spiritual Parish are:

- To help people understand that faith is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to help them to develop that relationship.
- To provide regular faith-building and learning opportunities for adults throughout the year with a mix of styles, times and commitment levels.
- To introduce new and different elements in Mass, building on the differing styles of each Mass to cater for the varied demographic in the parish.
- To put prayer and meditation in the centre of our parish life, encouraging everybody to pray even in small, simple ways and reinforcing the concept of the domestic church.
- To provide more opportunities for group prayer in different styles and settings

and at a variety of times.

- To ensure that those who are going through the process of preparation for the Sacraments are more “visible” to the wider parish community.
- Revisit the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the parish to give a people a renewed understanding and appreciation.
- To provide support to all married couples, regardless of how long they have been married, by building on the marriage preparation course.
- To increase individual confidence so people feel able to talk about matters concerning faith

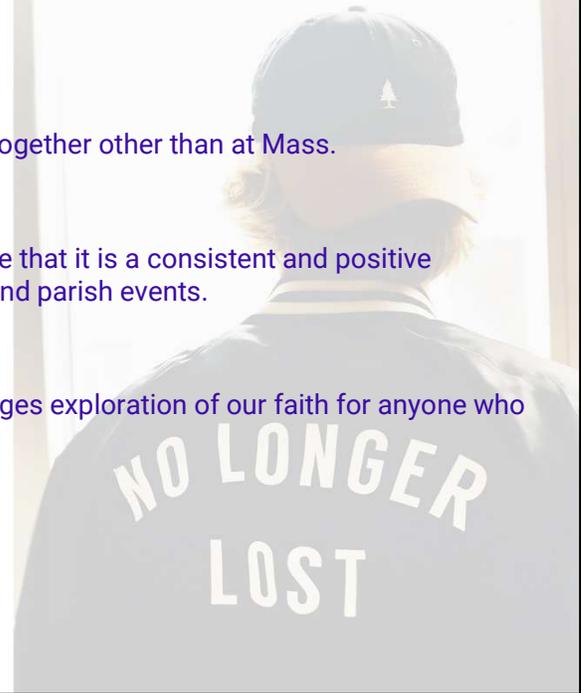
## A WELCOMING PARISH

To provide opportunities for parishioners to come together other than at Mass.

To build on the welcoming experience and to ensure that it is a consistent and positive experience for everyone at the start of all Masses and parish events.

To become an outward-looking parish that encourages exploration of our faith for anyone who wants to know more.

To ensure that new parishioners feel welcomed.



85% of people said they feel welcome in the parish, but we want to be a parish where 100% of people feel welcome, so our goals are:

- To provide opportunities for parishioners to come together outside Mass, creating a stronger sense of community and belonging both within and between all age groups, and enabling parishioners to get involved.
- To build on the welcoming experience and to ensure that it is a consistent and positive experience for everyone at the start of all Masses and parish events.
- To become an outward-looking parish that encourages exploration of our faith for anyone who wants to know more.
- To ensure that new parishioners feel welcomed.

## AN ACTIVE PARISH

To help people to recognise their talents and skills.

To create a culture of engagement where parishioners know that their talents and skills are appreciated and getting involved in parish life is easy, accessible, and rewarding.

To ensure a mix of groups, activities and roles are available to meet the needs of as many parishioners as possible.

To improve communication to and from parishioners about groups, activities and roles.

To ensure that anyone who undertakes a ministry is fully briefed and trained in the role.

To become a parish where participating & getting involved in parish life is something everyone wants to do and gets enjoyment from.

As we noted earlier, responses around the opportunities for people to use their talents and get involved in the parish varied across age groups. Similarly, the desire to get involved and find out more about groups and activities in the parish varied by age. Our goals to become an active parish where everyone has the opportunity and the desire to get involved are:

- To help people to recognise their talents and skills, the obvious and the unrealised, and how those can be beneficial to the parish.
- To create a culture of engagement where parishioners know that their talents and skills are appreciated and getting involved in parish life is easy, accessible, and rewarding. Promoting and understanding that we are all Church - we are all forming the 'Kingdom of God'.
- To ensure a mix of groups, activities and roles are available to meet the needs of as many parishioners as possible and that all groups in the parish are represented, truly welcoming and open to new ideas.
- To improve communication to and from parishioners about groups, activities and roles.
- To ensure that anyone who undertakes a ministry is fully briefed and trained in

the role

- To become a parish where participating and getting involvement in parish life, even in small ways, is something everyone wants to do.

## A FAMILY PARISH

To explore opportunities to fill gaps and expand on the provision for children across all age groups in the parish.

To ensure that adequate support is given to families whose children do not attend a faith school.

To enable and encourage more families to be involved at Mass.

To organise and promote relevant events aimed at specific groups within the parish and involve those groups in the organisation of those events.

We are a parish with a lot of families and a common theme in the survey feedback was the need to improve the provision for children, teenagers and young people. To achieve this we aim:

- To explore opportunities to fill gaps and expand on the provision for children across all age groups in the parish.
- To ensure that adequate support is given to families whose children do not attend a faith school.
- To enable and encourage more families to be involved at Mass
- To organise and promote relevant events aimed at specific groups within the parish and to involve those groups in the organisation.

## A SUPPORTIVE PARISH

To create a culture where every parishioner shares in the responsibility of being welcoming, encouraging, supportive and open to others in the parish.

To support people becoming 'closer' as a community - following the period of isolation and social distancing and beyond – learning from our experiences during lockdown.

To improve the visibility of all the support groups and channels available within the parish.

In response to the question of people's expectations of the parish, the word "Support" appeared multiple times. A parish should be a place where people feel supported and feel they can turn for help. Many of goals we have already set out covering other areas of parish life, such as welcoming and opportunities for people to be more involved will help us to be a parish where people feel supported. But in addition, we want to:

- To create a culture where every parishioner shares in the responsibility of being welcoming, encouraging, supportive and open to others in the parish.
- To support people becoming 'closer' as a community - following the period of isolation and social distancing and beyond – learning from our experiences during lockdown.
- To improve the visibility of all the support groups and channels available within the parish.



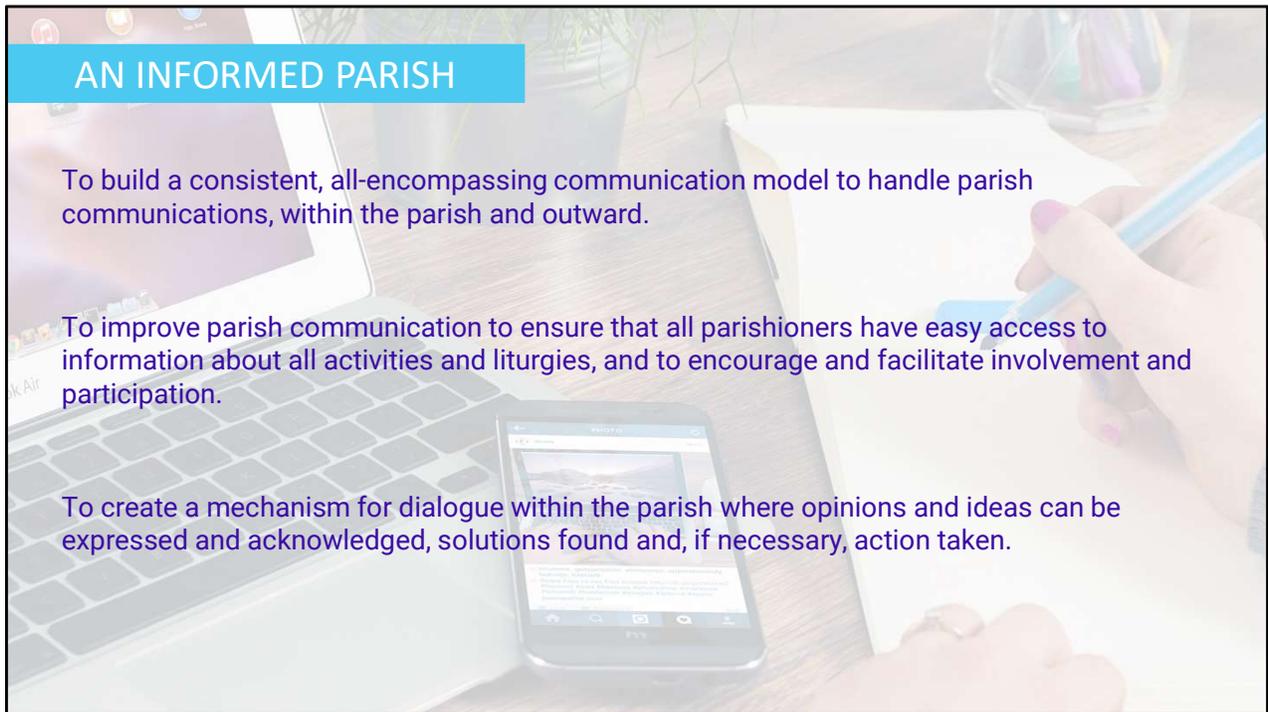
## A COMMUNITY PARISH

To engage more with other churches and the rest of the community and give parishioners opportunities to become involved in outreach activities.

To improve communication about all the community and outreach activities that do take place.

Of course, we don't just want to be an inward-looking parish and there was a desire in the survey that we be more involved in the local community. To this end we would like to:

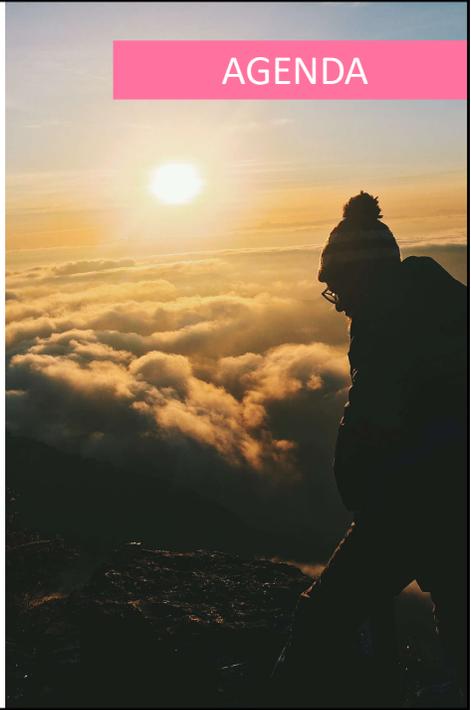
- engage more with other churches and the rest of the community and give parishioners opportunities to become involved in outreach activities.
- improve communication about all the community and outreach activities that do take place.



Finally, but possibly most importantly because it overarches all of the previous themes, is Communication. Throughout the survey this was highlighted as an area for improvement, and to move forward with our ambitious plan will require excellent communication within the parish, and this has to be two-way. Our goals for becoming an informed parish are:

- To build a consistent, all-encompassing communication model to handle parish communications, within the parish and outward.
- To improve parish communication to ensure that all parishioners have easy access to information about all activities and liturgies, and to encourage and facilitate involvement and participation.
- To create a mechanism for dialogue within the parish where opinions and ideas can be expressed and acknowledged, solutions found and, if necessary, action taken.

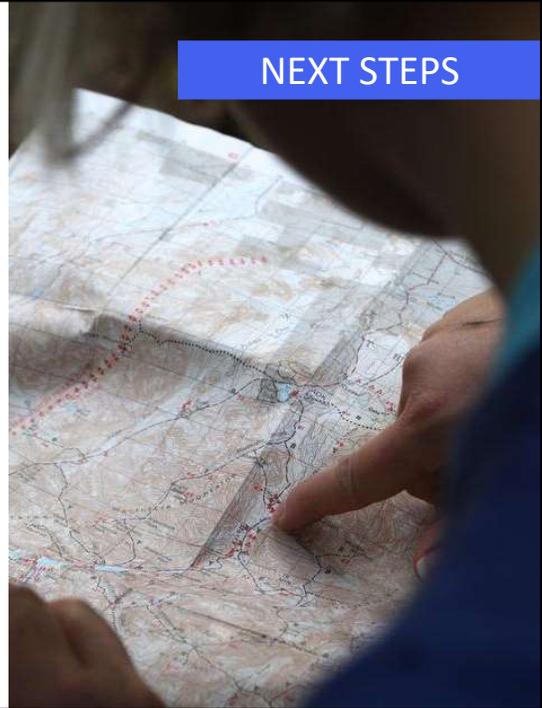
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We have developed an initial roadmap of tasks and actions.

In the short term our focus will be to:

1. Set up a Communication Team.
2. Set up a Pastoral Council.
3. Build on what we have learned during the pandemic and combine our Ministers of Welcome and Coronavirus volunteers into one Welcoming team.
4. Launch a new website.



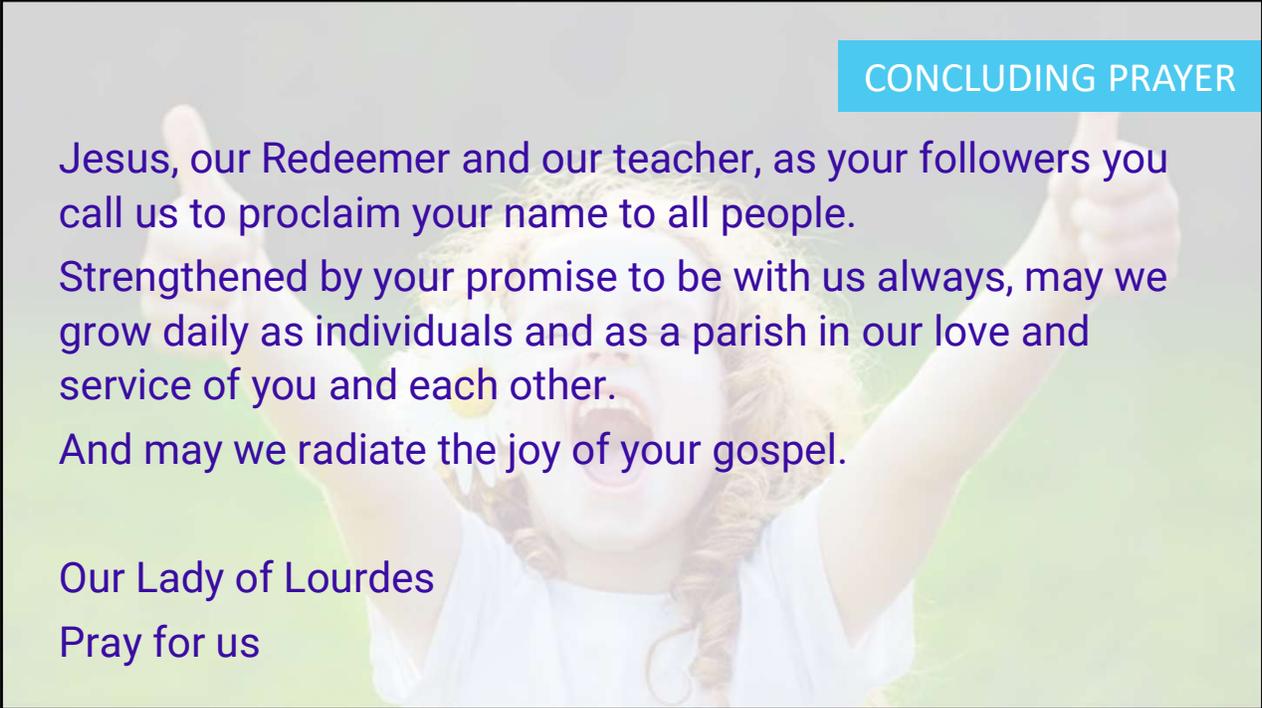
As you can see, what we have set out to do is no small task. It will take time to achieve all these goals and, as we do so, we hope to involve as many people as possible from across the parish.

We have developed an initial roadmap of actions and tasks, ranging from immediate to long-term, and these incorporate specific suggestions and ideas that were put forward in the survey.

At this time we are limited in what we can meaningfully achieve because of the current restrictions. However, we are able to begin work on the following priority tasks:

1. To set up a Communications team. The need for clear and consistent communication was a theme throughout the survey responses. This team will be tasked with developing and implementing an on-going plan to manage communication within the parish, making best use of all channels and mediums available, and to engage all groups, activities and initiatives in the plan. Once the role and scope of the team has been fully defined we will be seeking people with the right skills and enthusiasm to be part of the team. Could this be you?

2. We will also be establishing a Pastoral Council. This will be a forum where a representative group of parishioners, in the light of our calling to be missionary disciples, will discern the strategy necessary to realise this vision.
3. As with the communications team, once we have fully defined the role of the council and the requirements for the individual members we will be looking for the right candidates to fill these roles, with the aim of representing a cross-section of people from across the parish.
4. As soon as we are able, we plan to combine our two welcoming teams – our existing Ministers of Welcome and our current Coronavirus volunteers – and build on what we have learned during the pandemic to create a positive and uplifting welcoming experience for everyone at every Mass and parish event.
5. Work has also begun on a new parish website that we hope will reflect our vision and values and become a useful resource and information hub for all parishioners and anyone wishing to find out more.



## CONCLUDING PRAYER

Jesus, our Redeemer and our teacher, as your followers you call us to proclaim your name to all people.

Strengthened by your promise to be with us always, may we grow daily as individuals and as a parish in our love and service of you and each other.

And may we radiate the joy of your gospel.

Our Lady of Lourdes

Pray for us

Before we close this presentation, we would like to take a few minutes to pray together for our parish and community:

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Strengthened by your promise to be with us always, may we grow daily as individuals and as a parish in our love and service of you and each other.

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