

## **'Way of Life'**

When you wait for a bus or a train, how do you know what train/bus to catch? Look at the sign on the front. How do you know how to get there? A tube or bus route. What do you need to get on? An oyster/bank card/ticket.

In a similar way, the Church needs a 'sign on the bus', a tube/bus route, and a bank card. Otherwise, how do we know where we are going, how we get there, or how to get on?

Our parish 'sign on the bus' our "**who we want to be**" is described in our working parish 'vision statement' created by many of our parishioners. "To be a family where everyone is loved, life's meaning is awakened, and hope is ignited."

Our tube/bus route, **how we get there**, is described in our working purpose statement, "We personally encounter Jesus Christ and commit to follow him, and filled with his Spirit gather as a community to joyfully worship him, grow in knowledge and service of him, to make disciples of all nations and transform society in God's love."

Our oyster/bank card/ticket, **what we have to do**, is our new 'Way of Life'<sup>1</sup> (see newsletter & website). It's called a Way of Life, because early Christians, weren't called Christians. They weren't called Catholics. They didn't "Go to Church" – there were no church buildings. They were called 'Followers of the Way.' (Acts 24:14) Hence, 'Way of Life.'

I plan to work together in teams to refine each of these further. Clarifying **who we want to be**, **how we get there**, and **what we have to do** gives us a greater sense of parish and individual identity, purpose, and meaning in parish life.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Ephesians 4:11-13; See also Alan Hirsch, "5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ" (2017)

There are 5 key aspects of Jesus' Way of Life:

1. **Community/fellowship** – Mark: ““Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me....” Being a parishioner at Our Lady of the Holy Souls means welcoming. We have some wonderful welcome teams already at some Masses. In time, I would love to build up these welcome teams, and for us to decide what else we can do to truly welcome people to our community. This Church building should feel like our home. How many of us would let strangers into our home unwelcomed and ignore them? Likewise here. Each and every parishioner needs to see themselves as a welcome. If you see someone who is new, welcome them into this community for fellowship. Jesus says we are welcoming him. Our Lady's parishioners welcome.

2. **Evangelisation** – Wisdom: “the virtuous man is God's son.” Being a parishioner at Our Lady's means “being evangelised.” “Being evangelised” means knowing that we are not “virtuous”. Through Jesus, we are. We can know we are loved by God, and receive power to grow to become like Jesus, as sinners. Alpha is our parish's normal way to evangelise (help people encounter Jesus), and become “evangelised.” Our Lady's parishioners are “evangelised”.

3. **Worship** – James: “Why you don't have what you want is because you don't pray for it; when you do pray and don't get it, it is because you have not prayed properly, you have prayed for something to indulge your own desires.” Being a parishioner at Our Lady of the Holy Souls means prayer and worship. Give a daily, specific, achievable, realistic, time of prayer – e.g. 5 to 60 minutes in the morning and/or night. You can pray the bible. Use a prayer book. Use an app, e.g., the Bible in One Year App (by Nicky Gumbel), and/or Hallow app. Worship God with music – from ancient Gregorian chant to contemporary, e.g. Hillsong. Worship as a community at Mass every

Sunday. Families that pray together, stay together. Our Lady's parishioners worship.

4. **Faith growth** – Mark: “he was instructing his disciples.” Being a parishioner at Our Lady of the Holy Souls means **faith growth**. The question is not ‘are we being formed?’ The question is ‘who/what are we being formed by?’ Christians aren't like thermometers that change according to our surroundings – e.g., by TV, politics, social media, bad influences at home, school, internet, or work. Followers of Jesus are like thermostats. We determine the spiritual atmosphere in our family, work, school, and friends. Adults need intentional faith growth. We are starting new faith growth groups. This is open to all, especially for those interested in RCIA. Places are limited. Register by contacting [Kensalnewtown@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:Kensalnewtown@rcdow.org.uk) . Our Lady's parishioners do faith growth.

5. **Servant leadership** – Mark: “‘If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.’” Being a parishioner at Our Lady of the Holy Souls means service. Generous serving overcomes temptations to argue about who is the greatest, putting yourself down, or shyness. Serving gives even greater purpose, dignity, confidence, energy, and community. We already have so many wonderful people serving in our parish. Thank you! I invite you all to see our team's and ministry's sheet on the noticeboard and website. Try out serving on a team – no long-term commitment necessary. If you're on a team, identify and invite others to join and try serving in your teams. Our Lady's parishioners serve.

Brothers and sisters, we have a sign on the bus/train: a draft vision statement. We have a road/tube map: a draft purpose statement. We now have an oyster/bank card, ticket to get on: a draft ‘Way of Life’.

Not everyone is able to do everything all at once, if ever. What is important is that knowing that being a parishioner at Our Lady's does not merely mean

“coming to Mass” and leaving Jesus behind Monday to Saturday. Being a parishioner at Our Lady’s is a ‘Way of Life’.

What's stopping you welcoming the stranger into our parish, trying alpha, praying daily/worshipping weekly, faith growth, and/or joining one of our many service teams?

Join in the parish ‘Way of Life’ as fully as possible! Let's journey together to God, with Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and transform the world!