

St Barts Together

Edition 2 - November 2021

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There is an intimate link between evangelisation and human development, which must be expressed and developed in all evangelising work.

- Pope Francis



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Westminster Synodal Pathway

The synodal pathway was launched in all parishes on 16-17 October 2021. It is a listening journey instigated by the Pope and is taking place throughout all Catholic parishes across the world. The Pope's vision for a synodal Church is one of communion, participation, and mission.

October was preparation time, November and the beginning of Advent is listening time, then feedback and summary of parish outcomes will be sent to the Diocese by 17 December 2021. On 15 January 2022 there will be a presentation in Westminster to explain the feedback received, feeding into the 2023 Synod of Bishops. This is a very tight timescale.

Synodality means walking together. Listening and reflecting to discern what the Spirit is prompting us to do. The synodal experience is listening to God through listening to each other. The main discussion questions will be "How did God touch my life in those long and difficult months of the pandemic? How is the journeying together happening in our church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?" We should reflect together on how to renew our sense of mission in the light of 18 months experience of pandemic, as well as the reality of our local society and wider world.

We need to broaden out our reflections to include "What do we learn about our strengths and weaknesses of our lives in the Church. How easy is it to make a contribution, to participate? What are our hopes and dreams for the Church and ourselves?" Listening is the method, discerning is the aim, participation is the outcome. We hope to reach out to people who no longer attend Mass, other denominations, local food banks, divorced, gay and those who feel excluded in any way. All of this will be a challenge. How will we get the parish engaged in the process?

We think that the parish has made some progress to support parishioners during the pandemic by updating the parish database, sending out the missalettes and newsletter each week, producing the Welcome pack, the Ecumenism leaflet and reaching out to established parish groups to align them with our 5 priorities of Building Community, Spirituality, Youth, Ecumenism and Social Justice. The PPC has engaged in parish activities, such as the cake sale, family BBQ, Harvest Festival and Fairtrade lunch, and has plans for the Christingle Service, Advent Candlelight and Prayers, etc.

The PPC will hold up to 3 parish meetings/conversations using the synodal resources provided by Westminster Cathedral. We think these meetings could be on Zoom, after Mass and face to face in small groups. We will invite our friends from South St Albans Churches to come to these meetings to provide a voice from outside the Catholic Church.

The Synodal Pathway is a process of spiritual discernment that unfolds in prayer and dialogue with the word of God. We should ponder, prayerfully, what we see as gifts of God emerging in our meetings.

Teresa Clarke, Parish Representative for the Synodal Pathway

Synodal Pathway Prayer

We stand before you, Holy Spirit.
With you alone to guide us,
Make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
And how we are to pursue it.
Let us find in You our unity
So that we may journey together.
All this we ask of You,
Who are at work in every place and time,
In the communion of the Father and the Son,
Forever and ever. Amen



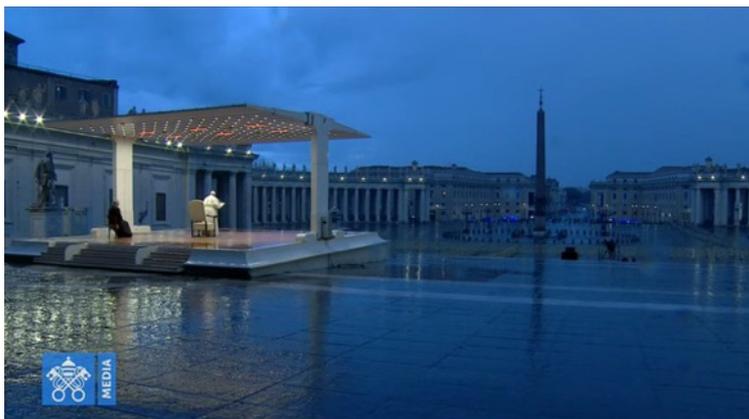
Teresa Clarke

Image taken from Westminster Diocese

Is God shaking us up? An opinion piece

As I write, my road in St Albans has held over 500 open-air coffee mornings: in fact, every day since first lockdown. Observation of distancing rules has meant a lot of shouted chat and laughter across the street, sometimes homemade cakes, and entertainment (yes – I sang at them) – in all weathers.

In this way, our neighbours got to know each other better, discovering those who couldn't venture beyond their front doors, and those who needed help, or perhaps a birthday sing-song – you name it we did it. "We're loving lockdown" one neighbour said last year. (He was recovering from COVID-19).



We've had to change the way we live; we have been given the time to think about how we spend our time, and now we need to recharge our batteries. The last year has given us all time to reflect about many things. For some the loss of loved ones, the strain of children at home, social isolation etc has been acute. For others, empty roads, the best spring and summer weather for years, and time for hobbies has been lovely.

When do we get back to normal? But what is normal going to be? Churches, and ours in particular, have to find a way forward. I believe the challenges we have are precisely the same as we were facing anyway, except that we have fast forwarded and it's more critical. The pace of decline in parish life could continue as the pandemic recedes. Yet the Church has weathered bad storms before; the Black Death, two World wars, Spanish Flu in 1918. We should heed Pope Francis's prophetic words from his encyclical (pastoral letter) *Evangelii Gaudium* in 2013 "to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style, and methods of evangelisation in [our] respective communities".

We are in a strong position here at St Barts because at the very time the pandemic struck, we were starting afresh. The new Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) has given us a vision of where we want to go. It is now up to us all in the parish to join in and participate. Some of us have moved away, some are reluctant to come back, but also potentially some are new. It will be a different congregation. Can we draw a line and say we are out of it and let's celebrate and go forward? It is becoming clear that it will not be like that and the relaxation from restrictions have been slower and could still be changeable. It is this lack of certainty that I have found so trying. How do we plan for the future? What kind of Church life do we want anyway? We must leave behind the culture of "but we have always done it this way".

Just as in my street, I think it's all about Community. We are social beings: we have missed our friends and our relations, and we did not meet in our churches physically for months. There is still nervousness. Pews have been wide apart, masks worn, singing restricted, and we don't like not being able to mingle freely. We have had to get used to streamed Masses and for some this has been beneficial. We have also recently prayed together in Novenas over Zoom. We should not forget the benefits online can bring.

However, it is in gathering together 'live' that our future will be shaped. Online is not enough. We now have the opportunity to put right something that was wrong before. The mentality of coming to Mass like a petrol station for a quick fill and then shooting off - this is not Christian Community life – no sharing or growing together. Are we being shaken up by God? There are so many ministries waiting to restart and needing participation. The Church Community is built up by doing and sharing together.

In addition, we must acknowledge that social media presence is now our shop window. The new revamped Diocese Website template will enable us to enhance our own web image. We have a new Facebook site. More importantly we have prioritised the creation of an up-to-date e-mail list, so we can update and communicate with you as never before.

The future will be a hybrid of virtual and live worship. Recently I have discovered online resources which can help to bring us closer to God, and we will share these and encourage you to use them. Here are two tasters. We will be promoting more as we discover them. Please let me know any you know about.

Peter Godwin | godwin.peter@gmail.com

Photos From Recent Parish Events

Cake Bake- August 2021



COP26 Young Christian Climate Network Relay Pilgrimage- August 2021



Parish BBQ- September 2021



Churches Together in St Albans- September 2021





Harvest Festival- October 2021



Upcoming Events

November 2021	December 2021	January 2022
Ecumenical Advent Groups	HCPT Carol Singing	Christian Unity Week
Christingle Service	Cake Bake - collection for Youth Talk	
Parish Synod Meeting	Candlelight Prayers and Carols	
	Family Christmas Mass	

To find out more please check the website. To participate, please contact the relevant group lead in person or Christine Lambert stalbanssouthpcc@rcdow.org.uk

If you would like to contribute to the next edition, please contact stalbanssouthpcc@rcdow.org.uk

Fire, fire, fire - let's get out!

Heading for the main doors of the church will be the correct decision most of the time, but what happens when it isn't? The only other fire exit is through the sacristy door, an immediate right turn and out through the fire door. Great, we can get out! So where do you go next? Follow the path across the garden to the back of the hall. Go past the compost bins at the back of the hall to emerge in the garden on the other side. Follow the path to the passage that leads straight ahead to the metal garden gate that opens easily from the inside by pushing the latch. You immediately turn left and come out into the car park. The exit is not obvious from the front of the church but it is there. Go to the assembly point at the front of the car park and await instructions from a fire warden. Bit of an odd route but it is the route out. Just be aware of it. The route is sign-posted all the way. Remember, go around the back of the hall: if you go past the compost bins you really are on the right route. Then follow the path out. Take a look at the pictures and diagrams posted around the church lobby and hall indicating the route.

Times have moved on and we need to improve our fire precautions. This has become evident after several fires, a death, and accidents across the diocese. We have already improved signage outside of the church and sprayed fire retardant on servers' gowns. We need to get a fire warden system operating at St Bart's. We badly need volunteers! The good news is that you will be providing a very valuable contribution to the church by doing very little. The main tasks of a fire warden are to direct people out of the church during a fire practice or emergency and to check the church is empty before you leave. If anybody remains because they cannot or will not leave you inform the fire service who will get them out. So simple! We will provide training on-line and warden identification. I would particularly like sacristans and welcomers to volunteer for this role because it fits in with what they are already doing but it is open to all. Three or four volunteers each mass would cover it with two on duty at any one time. Please volunteer by emailing or contacting the parish office (stalbanssouth@rcdow.org.uk) – we really need you!

Remember, there is no fire alarm on the St Bart's site. You must take anybody, any age, shouting, "fire" seriously and get out. This includes during mass. Do not wait for further instructions. Go to the assembly point at the front of the car park.

Do familiarise yourself with the exit routes and keep yourself safe- see photos on p8.

John Lambert

Fire Escape Route

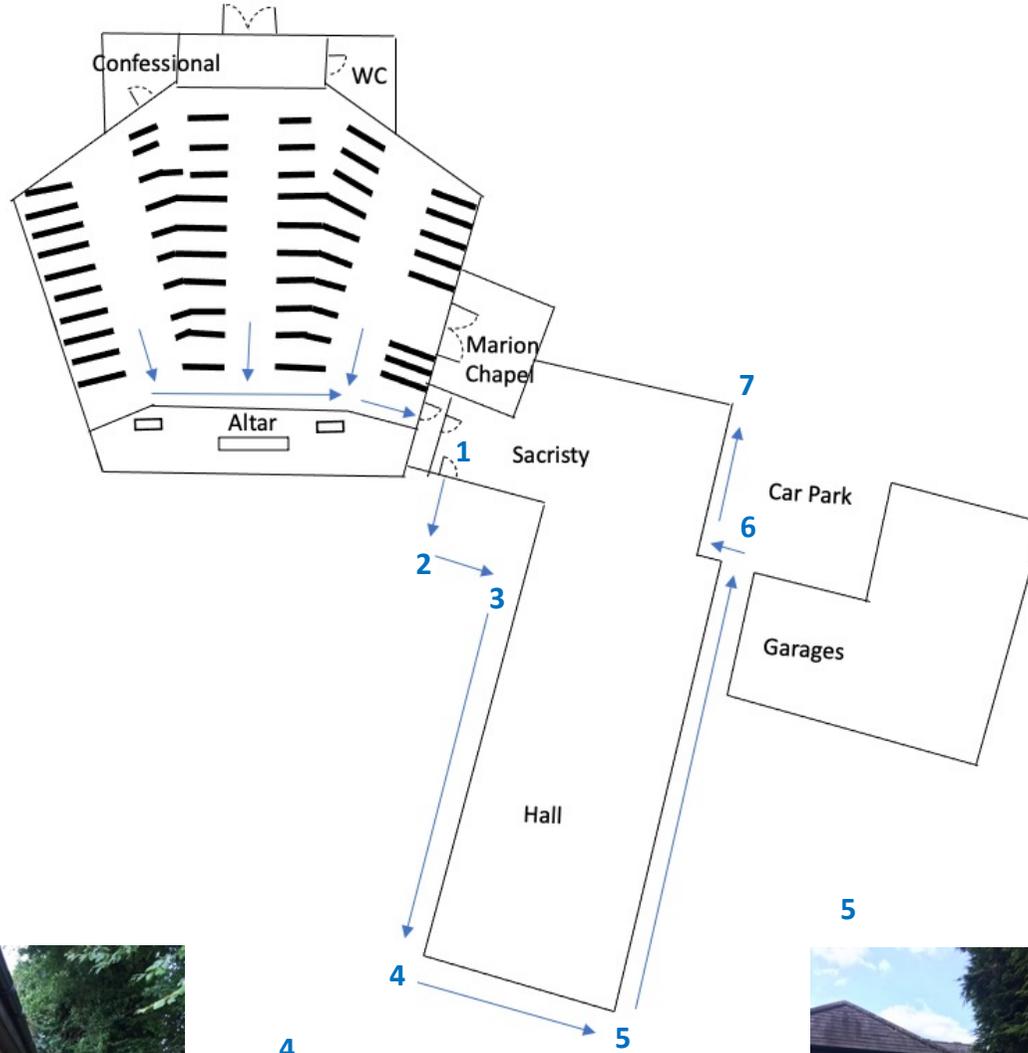
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Church schematic adapted from Chris Blandford's



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