

SYNOD REPORT - NORTH EAST DEANERY

INTRODUCTION

In response to the Synodal journey, a range of methods were deployed to gather information from Catholic households across parishes which together form the North East Deanery of the Archdiocese of Glasgow. The Deanery is made up of the following parishes:

- St Matthews, Bishopbriggs
- St Dominic's, Bishopbriggs
- Holy Family and St Ninian's, Kirkintilloch
- St Flannan's, Kirkintilloch
- The Carmelite Community, Kirkintilloch
- St John of the Cross, Twechar
- Holy Cross, Croy
- Our Lady and St Helen's, Condorrat
- St Joseph's, Cumbernauld
- Sacred Heart, Cumbernauld
- St Lucy's, Cumbernauld

Each parish devised a format of gathering information and deployed methods which attempted to ensure the voices of active and inactive parishioners could be heard and put forward. Methods of gathering information included:

- Online questionnaires
- Paper based questionnaires
- Discussion groups
- Parish Council meetings
- School groups

Each parish submitted a report in response to the questions set by the Archdiocese focussing on the experiences of the parish community in the spirit of *"Communion, Participation and Mission"* which were highlighted as the key themes of *"walking together as a Church with the Holy Spirit"*

Parishes attempted to ensure all parishioners were given the opportunity to feed into the report whilst taking extra steps to reach people who do not, or cannot attend church for a variety of reasons.

Whilst this report is aligned to the 10 questions set out by the Archdiocese of Glasgow, it is also worth noting that additional information may have been submitted which is considered to be outwith the scope of the set questions.

RESPONSE TO SYNODAL THEMES

1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY- WHAT DO WE EXCEL AT AND WHO DO WE LEAVE BEHIND?

Reports contained many similarities in relation to the strengths and areas for development within each parish. The common strengths that emerged through parish reports were mainly in relation to the following topics:

- recognition and gratitude for the roles carried out by volunteers before and during the pandemic
- appreciation for the flexibility of parishes who were able to adapt in order to continue to provide services online and pastoral support where it was needed.
- the importance of relationships and how their relationship with God, their family and their friends and neighbours helped
- individual and collective charity efforts which included people offering financial aid, foodbanks, time and companionship
- appreciation of Ministry – the pastoral and spiritual support received from priests as well as recognition of the volunteers involved in the Ministry of the Church.
- Faith preparation with particular emphasis on Sacramental preparation, children's liturgy and RCIA.

In contrast to the topics above there were points highlighted where the Church could do more to develop and build on the work that takes place. Points raised in the reports included:

- The need for more targeted social activities for women, young people, families and those who are vulnerable.
- Better inclusion for those who are marginalised - people are (or feel) excluded for a variety of reasons. Reports inferred this could be as a result of unconscious bias where there is a lack of awareness and understanding of the impact of actions or language on others.
- More activities and opportunities are needed for young people to engage with parish life.
- Sacramental preparation could be extended to include all Sacraments and faith support groups could be established or further developed.

Some parishes spoke of welcome hosts at the back of the church which has helped to build a stronger parish community. In addition to this, one report revealed that integrating and welcoming new parishioners is also an area that could be developed further, and the Welcome Ministry could help new attendees to build connections and relationships with fellow parishioners who are trying to integrate into a new parish community.

In summary, reports indicated that relationships with God, fellow parishioners and the wider community were taken for granted prior to the pandemic. Overall, there was acknowledgement that greater sense of community was created within parishes as a result of the pandemic. There was also a desire to extend and build upon this sense of belonging to ensure everyone felt welcome within their parish. The creation of more opportunities for people to engage socially with one another was also highlighted as a desired area for development.

2. LISTENING- DO WE EXCLUDE THE VOICES WE DON'T WANT TO HEAR?

Reports contained a range of opinions highlighting where the Church listens well and where the Church could listen more effectively and be more open to the voices of parishioners.

Parish Level

Overall, it was reported, at parish level, that the Church listens to parishioners and to the needs of the local community. There are many initiatives in place throughout the Deanery that engage and empower parishioners with the aim of helping to meet the needs of the most marginalised people in the community who are affected by poverty. This recognises where the Church at parish level has an existing positive impact. There were also efforts to listen to parishioners through focus groups, faith sharing groups, parish pastoral councils and creating opportunities for people to approach welcome ministers with concerns or when seeking information.

There were suggestions received on how to build on this work further through:

- regular social events,
- becoming more flexible and less judgemental,
- reaching out to those who are marginalised and may not ask for help
- having a more collaborative approach between parishes towards providing services and meeting the needs of communities
- help people to understand and feel that they are a part of the Church community
- creating opportunities for parishioners to be reflective could improve critical listening skills
- attracting young people to play an active role within parish life

Hierarchy

Reports commented on the positive steps that were being taken with regard to the Synod, however there were questions of how effective this would be with a genuine desire for the Synod to address the changes that need to take place within the Church.

Reports highlighted that the Church was inflexible which unconsciously excluded people from active parish life. These comments were in relation to young people and women not being listened to; the LGBT+ community and those who are divorced feeling excluded.

Comments related to parish level communications were generally positive, however there was less constructive feedback in relation to the Church hierarchy. There were views that the hierarchy listens less effectively to what happens at parish level. Communication with the Diocese and the Church hierarchy was said to be one way without the opportunity for parishioners to engage in dialogue or reflection. It was conveyed that the “*top down*” approach from the Church hierarchy needs to change to being a dialogue with parishes in order to achieve the desired outcomes where people at all levels of the Church have a valued input and can impact on the achievements of inclusion within local communities.

Another point for consideration was the language that is often used by the Church. Some reports spoke of how this can exclude people who do not understand the meanings or motivations of the Church. For example, the Synod seeks to ensure the voices of everyone within the community are heard by the Church. If we look at this further, the word “Synod” is specific to the Church and is unlikely to attract people who are currently disengaged from parish life. Perhaps language better understood by parishioners such as “consultation” would have attracted more response from those who are currently inactive.

3. SPEAKING OUT- DO WE SPEAK OUT COURAGEOUSLY, WHO DOES THE WORLD CONSIDER SPEAKS FOR CATHOLICISM?

There were a number of considerations in response to the question of speaking out. It was broadly felt that Pope Francis, the Cardinals and Bishops speak out on behalf of the Church. Some responses felt that their voice could and should be stronger in opposition to some of the decisions made in society outwith the Church. It was felt that the hierarchy of the Church should use technology and social media more effectively in order to do this.

Feedback received in relation to question 2 informs us that before speaking out, we have to listen in a non-judgemental fashion. In combining this with the point that people felt communication was poor and their views were not listened to, consideration should be given to listening first and foremost, taking action on what we hear and responding as necessary at the required level of the hierarchy. This would help build confidence from the ground up to help people to speak out in support of the aims of the Church in a local, regional, national and global context.

There were reflections within reports that people were afraid to speak out in support of Catholicism for fear of being judged or ridiculed. People lack confidence in speaking out and need reassurance and opportunity to have their voices heard. Building on the response to question 2, if people feel their voices are not valued within their own Church community, it is reasonable to say that this would impact on a person's confidence to speak out in support of the Church.

It was suggested that there should be opportunities for people to speak out openly through targeted groups, schools, faith sharing groups and representation to the parish council. This should then be followed up by 2-way communication from the parish council to parishioners and where required to the Diocese who should then escalate communications to the Church hierarchy where required.

Building on some of this work could create the conditions for listening and respecting the opinions of others in order to fully understand the reasons for the lack of participation within the Church. It was also commented that the difference of opinion should be respected, reflected and discussed without the need to force a parochial view on any particular topic

Amongst reports was the topic of abuse within the Church and how this had broken the trust of the laity. It was suggested that the Church needs more time to heal and rebuild trust before speaking out. When combining this alongside the response to question 2 and in particular the people who feel left behind, this could also affect the confidence of Church members in their desire to speak out in support of the Church. It was highlighted that effective use of social media could assist with this journey.

It was emphasised that the Church as a whole had a strong motivation to speak out for those who are, or who feel marginalised. This is evidenced in the feedback of parishes who make great efforts to take action in supporting individual and collective efforts to reduce poverty through SVDP, foodbank donations and financial aid to assist with inequalities faced by a range of global emergencies.

4. CELEBRATING OUR FAITH- ARE OUR CELEBRATIONS ENGAGING, NOURISHING, SATISFYING?

Responses to this question were very rich and varied. Where some reports focused primarily on celebration and engagement during services, others highlighted the celebration of faith through engagement of people in the spirit of community.

Reports emphasised that the liturgy was the most important part of our faith and many people recognised that this had been taken for granted prior to the churches being closed during the pandemic. Parishes adapted to meet the needs of delivering services to parishioners online. In recognising the benefits of online provision to those who are sick or housebound, there is a desire to maintain this provision. However, there was concern that some parishioners may choose to access live stream services instead of attending and being part of the Church community.

Through discussions and reflections, this raises 2 questions:

1. Technology to deliver services online has been available for some time prior to the pandemic and would have been a valued adjustment for those who cannot attend Mass in person. What prevented the Church from embracing this before the pandemic?
2. If someone feels that they are a valued part of a Church community, why would they choose to attend services online?

Interestingly, it was noted that the language used in reports had a tendency to reflect the level of engagement from parishioners involved in parish life. For example, where a report reflected that participation was high, the language conveyed a sense of belonging and attachment to the Church by using words such as *“parish family, solidarity and welcoming”*. It could also be suggested through feedback in reports that where parishioners feel nourished, they are more likely to be engaged and therefore satisfied.

It is seen as the role of the clergy to engage parishioners through proclaiming the liturgy which in turn nourishes parishioners. This said, there were strong links in most reports between faith and community. Although some reports separated these out when speaking about activities that take place within the Church it remained clear that parishioners identify with volunteering, participation, and sense of belonging within a community as fundamental part of their faith.

5. RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION- WHAT HINDERS THE INVOLVEMENT OF ALL THE BAPTISED?

Comments directly related to people not attending services appear to be based on the Church's views on LGBT+; women priests and a lack of social connection or belonging. There were further comments on how some people don't understand the Catholic faith or the symbols and language being used. It was also indicated that following a long period of restrictions being in place due to the pandemic, it will take time for people to remember rituals and prayers when returning to practise their faith.

The pandemic created opportunities for people to support one another through a shared understanding of supporting those in need. It was said that a dynamic Parish is often more attractive to people wanting to become involved. The desire for parishioners to have a sense of belonging within their Parish community was evident throughout all reports however there was a variety of considerations which prevented this. This included communication and understanding of parish structures, how to become involved, who to approach and what the commitments of becoming involved would be.

Reports were common in highlighting the lack of confidence and self-belief held by members of the Church. Reservations in getting more involved in Parish life included a fear of being judged; getting it wrong; being ridiculed; not fitting in; and not understanding what was required. In addition to these barriers to participation included people not recognising the skills they have to offer and being afraid of taking on more responsibility than they felt able to. This includes considerations for people who already have commitments to work, family and caring for others.

There was much comment on young people and how they may view the Church as irrelevant without understanding the good that can be brought into their lives. Young people may not recognise that there are opportunities and initiatives available that could be of interest to them and many of the things they are involved in outside the Church, often began within the Church.

There were some key considerations when talking about effective methods of engaging parishioners. Relationships with others was a consistent theme to being involved in Parish life and this was supported by strong leadership and inspiration from the Parish Priest as the head of the parish community. Although parishes take different approaches to engaging parishioners in activities, the role of the clergy and their relationship with the laity in ensuring parishioners felt their skills and knowledge added value (i.e., parishioners felt they had something to offer) was seen as a key vehicle for people becoming or remaining involved.

Some suggestions for increasing participation involved changes to existing structures within parishes and communicating information using methods that parishioners identify with such as social media as well as bulletin notices.

The importance of social activities to help create the sense of belonging among parishioners and creating opportunities for people to come together were also featured as a welcome development which would help people to meet one another and would be especially helpful for new parishioners.

There are additional considerations for members of the parish community who could not attend services or be involved in the church for a variety of reasons. This included people who are sick or have barriers to participation who require additional support to feel part of the Church community.

6. DIALOGUE- DO WE SPEAK TO OTHER CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY, OTHER FAITH COMMUNITIES?

Question 6 and Question 7 had very similar responses and these should be read as one composed response.

Good, local ecumenical relations is an expectation of the church, not an add-on or choice. But it needs to be wanted by the people and their ministers as a fundamental part of the community. An authentic desire to be together - not lip-service or ticking-the-box.

There was much feedback in support of parishes engaging with other faith communities. There was also reference to this work being led by and communicated through the Church hierarchy.

7. THROUGH OUR COMMON BAPTISM, OTHER CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE IN OUR LIVES- HOW DOES THIS MANIFEST ITSELF?

In some places there is already much ecumenical activity, '*walking together in faith*', with recognition that we are all God's children. This manifests itself through the common sense of community and purpose which helps local organisations to support vulnerable people through food banks, SVDP and giving time and financial support to local and national charity efforts. There is also recognition that we can learn from each other.

This work needs to be further developed, however, there are considerations within this which could create barriers to development. Some barriers highlighted include:

- A lack of knowledge or understanding of about who the communities of faith are, their level of approachability, who they represent, and who the main contact people are.
- A lack of interest from the Parish Priest
- A lack of interest from other denominations

In creating a greater sense of community, parishioners are more confident in their faith and expressing their belief and belonging to the parish family as well as a desire to support social justice aims of people less fortunate, irrespective of belief.

Good ecumenical activity can begin with genuine friendship between priests and ministers. It starts with this early, grass-roots friendship and willingness to engage with each other, from this essential relationship others will take the lead. It has to be genuine and understanding that many of these relationships already occur and exist in daily life with friends, neighbours and family from other denominations, but there can still be hesitance when it comes to Church. There are opportunities for social engagements with other communities of faith which could build stronger relationships to help with our common mission.

There should also be more access to interfaith knowledge to help build a better understanding of our common purpose and the differences between communities of faith.

One report spoke of the challenges of being closely connected to other communities of faith in that there are limited places for Catholic children within Catholic schools and these are sometimes filled by children of other denominations. This can speak highly of the closely aligned values of other Christian communities however, there are fewer places available for Catholic children who then have to travel outwith their area. Another consideration is in Catholic parents being more comfortable with sending their children to a non-denominational school.

8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION IN OUR CHURCH- HOW DO WE OPEN THIS TO ALL CHURCH MEMBERS?

Responses to this question were very rich and reports recognised where developments could improve participation in the Church through a well-defined and communicated structure, good governance, and due diligence.

Authority – There was a variety of comments about authority within the local, diocesan and global context of the Church. These comments could be broken down into sub themes:

- At parish level, the relationship between the Parish Priest and parishioners is seen as key to participation and engagement.
- The role of the Parish Priest as the head of the local Church community and the expectations placed upon him to have a structured approach to all aspects of the Church community and its members was also highlighted.
- There was much opinion offered on the hierarchy of the Church. This varied from questions related to the laws that we abide by (Canon Law), the role of the Archdiocese and how the Church as a whole could or should develop and modernise to address priest shortages and acceptance of those who felt detached from the Church. There were references to Church members who felt unwelcome within the Church due to personal circumstances or life events which they felt were beyond their control.
- There is very little lay leadership in some parishes, with little authority being delegated to them.
- Laity need to know what it is they are doing, perhaps a hierarchy of lay people where views are shared is necessary to empower parishioners to take responsibility. Laity taking on more responsibilities for the running of a Parish could also help to free up time for Priests.
- Church leaders are accountable and need to listen and act on the views of lay people.
- Responsibility for the running of a parish should be shared between church leaders and lay people.

A clearly defined and communicated structure within a parish is necessary for members of the Church to understand who to approach and in what circumstances. Whilst this is very well developed in some areas, the pandemic and changing priorities has resulted in some parts of the structure being unclear. Development of distinct roles and points of contact would offer more clarity to those who are not involved in parish life. This should be uniform throughout parishes to enable understanding amongst parishioners.

Reports also focussed on the structure of the Catholic Church at a Diocesan level and where this could provide support to parishes through listening to the needs of parishioners.

There were suggestions of the Diocese providing support to have more catechists within parishes and training the laity to provide support for RCIA, children's liturgy, bereavement groups and Eucharistic ministers. There were also suggestions for specialist support to be made available to parishes to enable support to individuals and families who have been affected by addictions such as alcohol and substance misuse.

Although it was felt that support is very good at parish level, it was highlighted that oversight from the Diocese could help improve parishes that do not or cannot provide similar levels of support for a variety of reasons. It was also suggested that parishes could pool resources to provide some services to those in need. This would maximise the skills and experiences available ensuring parishes have access to the right level of support, by a person with the appropriate skills and knowledge at the time it is most needed.

Reports indicated that roles at a parish and Diocesan level were not easily understood. Generating creative ideas for supporting the formation of clergy with models of priests supporting each other, should be examined. This should be developed further using insight and knowledge to understand the future needs of Ministry at all levels. The Church should look beyond the fixed position it currently holds to ask where the skills and assets of the wider Church can be used most effectively. One consideration within this is the role of women in senior leadership positions which has been raised as a significant issue throughout the Synod process.

In addition to this, the development of an organisational diagram would explain and help people to understand how decisions are made or how each element of the structure interacts with other parts of the structure at the same or a higher level. This could also be used to help to identify gaps in knowledge, support or distribution of volunteers.

Responses highlighted the level of participation and the sense of community that is felt within parish communities. The concept of 'parish family' is the engine for moving forward together harmoniously as a Church. It was felt that lay people often want to be involved and want to be asked to be involved by church leaders. Recommendations for further development were around the need for more spiritual and social events, support groups and opportunities for people to volunteer. Suggestions received included but were not limited to setting up more targeted support groups for alcoholism; substance misuse; bereavement and mental health support; organising more social events, family nights and youth activities. This could be facilitated through tapping into the talents and skills that many lay people have through the provision of opportunities for practical involvement. There should also be caution that opportunities for involvement are open to new volunteers bringing fresh ideas and experiences which could help to break down factions within parish communities.

It was also expressed that adult education is needed to lift people towards a better understanding of their faith and the Church, even (perhaps especially) cradle-Catholics. Introduce mentoring to support people in their learning towards being 'intentional disciples' – not necessarily academic.

There was a common theme of communication across reports which indicates a need for development in this area. Good communication in parishes is vital along with the willingness to work at participating better, to make progress. Openness and sharing experiences and learning both within and across parishes, perhaps borrowing mainstream leadership models for best practice.

Parishes and their people should be open and willing to learn from each other - not be insular, competitive, or 'parochial' in attitude. There is much value in sharing what is going on elsewhere. Establish Synods of the Laity at national and local levels. This point is covered in more detail in the following questions.

9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING- HOW DO WE ENSURE THIS IS INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION THE FRUITS OF THE DISCERNMENT OF ALL THE BAPTISED?

It was emphasised through discussion that the process of discernment is not a natural skill for some people and a learning process and that the Church could provide direction and support in order that this is exercised effectively at all levels. Intentional discipleship was also discussed, and it was felt that some people wish to be seen as intentional disciples.

The phrase “Parish family” was used often and communicated an understanding that the Church is the people, not the building. Using this strength to take an approach that values the skills, knowledge and experience of everyone who wishes to be involved and the view that everyone has something to offer could also bring people together in the spirit of community and discipleship. Empowering people to take responsibility would bring benefits for parishes through individual and collective provision of service to the community. This would require initial support to ensure that those involved were comfortable in taking the level of responsibility required to fulfil tasks and become good role models for others. Through this process, people will be able to share and grow together with natural leaders emerging to take the lead on specific duties within a parish. The Synod has helped to bring out the best in people and showed that the Church is prepared to listen. There is an opportunity to build on this momentum to create the sense of community that is desired by so many. The Church should build on this further at parish level and develop some “quick wins” to show that we are listening and taking the views of others seriously.

Moving forward there should be a process which helps the Church to continuously build on and improve the services provided to meet the needs of parishioners. This requires continued engagement and feedback from parishioners. Building a sense of community means listening to everyone’s feedback. This is important for parishioners to feel valued, empowered and feel they belong within the Church. Reacting to feedback and better communicating the actions that are being taken will help parishioners in this respect. It was reported that the Church and parishioners can sometimes be overly critical in putting across views for improvement. Where it is true that there is always room for improvement, communication on the actions being taken and the purposes of those actions should be positive, reflective and recognise the impact of any efforts that have been put in place.

The final point raised was in relation to having an Archdiocesan pastoral plan and ensuring the ambitions of this was measured against the actions taken within parishes. Having a good, well communicated pastoral plan helps parishioners to understand the areas in which the wider Church would like to develop and improve. This would also help to ensure that parishes are seeking to meet similar objectives in a way that meets the needs of individuals and communities across the Diocese.

10. HOW DO WE CONTINUE TO WALK TOGETHER, LISTENING AND DISCERNING THE WAY FORWARD?

Reports have been complimentary and showed gratitude for how the Church adapted over the last 2 years and how some areas of parish life are continuing towards being fully operational in providing activities that were available prior to the pandemic. There was also recognition that much has changed across the world because of the pandemic. People have moved to different parishes and some people have not yet returned to engage in parish life. Some parishes have acted upon this recognition and created a “Welcome Ministry” to help people to feel more comfortable when entering the church and trying to create a friendly, approachable environment to enable parishioners to get to know a “friendly face” where they could ask questions or engage in short conversation.

This brought discussion on the points highlighted within reports of the importance of good relationships within a Parish family and questions of how these relationships with God, each other, and an individual’s relationship within themselves could be fostered. Along with suggestions for more social activities to bring people together and the creation of focus groups to better understand and meet the needs of marginalised groups, there was a need to ensure that Parish Councils reflect the community that is being served. This requires representation from all active groups within a parish and ensuring those who are most likely to be marginalised within the community have an opportunity and are encouraged to have their voices heard.

It was also highlighted that communication is a 2-way process that involves listening and providing information. Communication of the activities taking place within parishes as well as in neighbouring parishes could help to widen participation. The suggestion of creating and promoting an activities section within websites at a parish and Diocesan level with information of all events taking place could help with this.

Having a collective approach across parishes would help to better provide services to meet different needs.

For example, Mass provision in neighbouring parishes should be arranged to avoid clash of times thus providing a greater choice of Masses to maximise engagement. One way this could present is through parishes agreeing to take responsibility for covering different styles of Mass such as Latin, youth, children or charismatic. This could be further developed to offer joint spiritual or social events across clusters of Parishes. Taking this approach further and building on the spirit of the Synod there should also be opportunity for collective reflection on the impact and direction of service provision. This would allow parishes to share best practice and help each other to understand and navigate the challenges presented when implementing new ideas or finding new ways of approaching existing initiatives.

Acknowledging and understanding that no one has all the answers to the questions and challenges being posed as well as ensuring the voices of all parishioners were considered and included, Parishes would be able to support each other to fully consider the duty of care for parishioners, volunteers and clergy, helping everyone to undertake the Synodal journey. Taking this approach and acting with due diligence helps protect everyone involved and further develop relationships between each part of a parish family. Parishes could be matched to communities with similar profiles to allow for a review of emerging needs and suitable developments as well as support and guidance for what has worked well. This could help to build on efforts put in by similar communities or prevent similar errors being made by different parishes. If this matching process were to be exercised at Diocesan level, communications could help ensure that any serious consequences related to governance or due diligence were recognised and acted upon early in the development process. Developing this further could connect people within parishes to experiences further afield in different parts of the same country, continent, or wider world.

LIMITATIONS OF RESPONSES

The timing of the Synod consultation within parishes meant that people were not yet fully connected within their Parish communities following several periods of lockdown and Covid restrictions.

Different approaches to consultation took place with each parish carrying out methods which were felt to be best suited to local needs. Where this shows strength in consulting with parishioners in the spirit of Synodality, different methods of consultation could yield different results. Some Parishes maximised the use of technology which makes analysis of responses easier and can sometimes have a higher reach than traditional questionnaires however, this could present barriers for those who have no access to digital devices or have low digital skills. Similarly, some parishes only used traditional methods which may have resulted in a lower response rate despite attempts to reach all parishioners. Another method used was focus groups which has provided some rich feedback for inclusion within the report, however, the profile of members of focus groups is unavailable making it uncertain whether marginalised communities were represented.

As there is no profile of people providing feedback to parishes, some suggestions, although well intended, may come from people who have limited knowledge of proposals being put forward. For example, there is no evidence within the data to suggest that proposals for the creation of groups to provide mental health support or addiction support comes from people who have lived experience of these issues. This then raises the question of how much support could or should be provided by parishioners in what is often considered specialist areas of work. Similarly, responses talking about the needs of vulnerable people or young people were not necessarily completed through the eyes of people whose life we aim to improve. There was also no consideration within the data highlighting the boundaries of practise for volunteers. This would include an understanding of the depths of vulnerability which is essential to provide safeguarding to those who need it.

It was also noted that some responses to local consultation may not have a full understanding of the position of the Church. Consideration should be given to the perceptions of those are, or who feel, separated from the Church where there was an indication of some people not being permitted to receive the Sacraments due to being divorced or LGBT+.

A similar consultation with the targeted groups mentioned throughout this report may help to provide more extensive information and ideas to better understand the support required; seek out appropriate support coordinators to coordinate groups or sessions and triangulate the information that has been put forward.

Whilst important that the views of people in local parishes are heard, some people do not want to, or cannot, be more involved for a variety of reasons such as commitments for childcare, caring for the sick, work commitments or additional responsibilities in another area of their community.

There was much said about young people however, we are aware that the views of young people are being gathered from schools across the diocese. This helps to ensure the views collected are from young people themselves and that anything put in place is being done with young people instead of to young people.

A suggestion for moving forward would be to collect the raw data that was submitted to parishes. This would have to be anonymised for the purposes of GDPR however, a deep dive into the data using the same method could provide a much richer picture of the common challenges, positive impacts and areas for further development which would help to create a pastoral plan for the Diocese.