

Parish of St John the Baptist & St Kentigern, Edinburgh

Parish Synod Meetings Report

The Parish Pastoral Council decided to hold two meetings. These took place on 15th January 2022 at St Kentigern's and 19th February 2022 at St John the Baptist.

From all the questions proposed in the Archdiocesan preparatory resources the PPC decided to focus discussions around three questions for each of the two themes: Communion & Participation and Mission.

15th January – Communion & Participation – ca. 25 participants

1. What does participation in the life of the parish mean?
2. What would my meaningful participation look like?
3. How can we as a parish reach out to those who don't feel welcome or are no longer interested in Jesus Christ?

It was recognised that participation in the life of the parish means taking part in parish services and events. It means being willing to respond to parish initiatives and being ready to contribute time and talent to the parish even if only in small ways.

A 'culture of responsiveness' requires people to have a sense of belonging to a place. People still feel that they belong to one or other of the churches first and foremost and not so much the parish as a whole.

The current model of parish leadership lying exclusively with the Parish Priest can be a barrier to the laity participating in the administration of the parish. Sometimes priests are not so good at delegating responsibilities and sometimes are too dictatorial. A greater degree of co-responsibility in the running of the parish was thought to be a good thing but it was recognised that Canon Law doesn't easily allow for this. It is also true that laity reinforce the culture of sole leadership by referring unnecessarily at times to the priest for directions. Teaching leadership skills in seminary would be beneficial. Having Parish Teams with paid lay leaders would foster co-responsibility. For example delegating youth ministry to a paid youth worker.

The question about reaching out to those who don't feel welcome triggered some discussion about attitudes towards people who identify as LGBT, divorced people and women's ministry in the Church. Opposing views were expressed, generally polarised between the view that the Church should change her teaching to become more relevant to modern UK society and the view that the Church must continue to proclaim what she believes to be true as revealed in Scripture and Tradition interpreted by the Magisterium of the Church. Both sides agreed that all people must be treated with compassion and love and not condemnation and personal judgement.

Reaching out requires the ability to listen to people's concerns and experience. Parishioners need to be ready and equipped to explain the faith and teaching of the Church while always being kind and supportive. Our aim should be to kindle faith in Jesus before all else because without this nothing the Church teaches will bear much weight.

In general we need to communicate better with the non-Catholic community around us and find ways to invite others to 'come and see' or to 'come back and see'. This could involve advertising more widely things like RCIA, having books to hand out to anyone interested. We could have the churches open at regular times for people to come and light a candle and pray and have parishioners available to offer tea and coffee and a chat.

Reaching out to families and young people was seen as especially important. More could be done to work with parents presenting their children for Sacraments to help them have the confidence to hand on the faith.

19th February – Mission – ca. 20 participants

1. What is the work of a missionary disciple? Do I believe that God has called me to follow him as a disciple?
2. How can our parish be a light for our community, to share with others the love of Jesus and his saving truth?
3. How can I respond? What can I realistically give?

The work of a missionary disciple is to proclaim the Gospel, to bring Christ to others by living like him in prayer and charity. Discipleship springs from faith and needs to be firmly rooted in prayer which leads to action. Proclaiming the faith can take place at home with lapsed family members and speaking to

children and grandchildren about our faith and how it informs our life. It can also be in the workplace and wider culture where, without being pushy or overbearing, we should never be shy about declaring our allegiance to the faith. Being a missionary disciple also means engaging in active charity, for example, through organisations like SSVP, Freshstart and Bethany Christian Trust, all of which are active in or supported by our parish.

The question asking how our parish can be a light brought forth several practical suggestions.

- Revive the monthly Community Lunch.
- Reactivate and develop ecumenical links and shared activities with other local churches. Encourage more Catholics to get involved with these.
- Encourage and celebrate school initiatives.
- Ask to post the parish newsletter on the school website.
- Establish stronger relationship between the parish and St Augustine's High School.
- Try to make Mass more accessible, especially for younger people. Eg, invite young musicians from St Augustine's to periodically provide music in church. Take care to explain the current interpretation and relevance today of Scripture readings that might be off-putting, eg, Adam and Eve.
- Find ways of engaging young people in parish activities after they have completed Confirmation.
- Send a letter/email welcoming parishioners back.
- Establish a welcoming group for those who feel ostracised.
- Get involved in local charitable activities such as foodbanks.
- Run an Alpha Course.

Other suggestions for activities in the parish.

- Form small faith groups/house groups for faith sharing.
- Men's Group
- Youth Group

It was thought that having regular parish meetings/assemblies in order to continue the process of 'synodality' would be beneficial.