

Parish of St Cuthbert Egham
Parish Consultation Document Summary
2015-2017

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Introduction

In the autumn of 2015 Bishop Richard asked the parish to undertake a consultation on what they wished the parish to look like in 100 years' time – quite a task. It was decided to launch the consultation process during Advent 2015 and then to start the detailed consultation across the entire parish during Lent 2016 with a view to completing it by Pentecost 2016. During the consultation a number of people raised concerns that some groups may not have been involved in the process and, as a result, the consultation was not completed until September 2016. This ensured that the process was all-inclusive.

The aim was to look at the parish from the liturgical, spiritual, sacramental, and pastoral perspective (including outreach) and then to look at what the parish needed by way of pertinent and sustainable infrastructure and plant to deliver the vision.

This task was important in terms of how the Church views its Mission and also the need for evangelisation and catechesis.

A number of Popes have re-iterated the great commission given to us by Jesus Christ:

- “Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise.” Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14
- “No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples” St Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 3
- “Evangelisation is the task of the church” – Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* 111
- “The purpose of the church is to evangelise” GDC 46 (General Directory for Catechesis)

Bishop Richard met with the parish in October 2015 and he explained what he wished to happen and how he would take forward the views of the parish that came from the consultation.

Bishop Richard gave us the benefit of his own experience in undertaking a consultation and laid down clear guidance for how he wished it to be undertaken so that he could make a decision. He was very clear that whilst he would seek views and guidance from others – ultimately he would make the decision on how the parish would move forward. The decision was his and no one else's.

Bishop Richard has made no secret of the need for the church to become Missionary and has himself asked the Diocese to adopt the theme of Prayer, Formation and Mission. He is calling for us to become a Missionary parish. For many, discussing and proposing changes to the parish is not easy and there was a level of discomfort within the parish. So, opportunities were made available for people to write, email, meet individually, in small groups and larger groups (including parish meetings) to provide their views. Individuals had discussions after Mass and other activities and also home visits were made to engage individuals and families.

There are individual sections covering the main areas considered and discussed during the consultation. There is also a general section where comments that might apply to more than one section have been recorded. At the back of this report there is a section which lists those groups that were approached and gave their views.

The consultation provided an opportunity for the parish to give their views on all aspects of parish life. However, it was not a vote on the areas discussed and was a means, as requested by Bishop Richard, for the parish to declare their views which Bishop Richard had agreed he would take seriously in any decisions made by him. No one was

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forced to take part. However everyone was actively encouraged to do so. It was important also to try and seek a view on what the parish felt was sustainable, scalable and transferable over a period of time and to try and find a flexible model that would support future parish, deanery and Diocesan need.

A big thank you goes to everyone who participated in the consultation and for every comment passed and what follows is a summary of everyone's contribution.

Cultural Aspects

In 2013 Pope Francis said:

"I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security."

In everything we do we must have more than intellectual conviction. As an individual and a community we should feel our own individual and others "pain". Otherwise how can we have the conviction to change things? Far too often we have been an intellectual church and have retreated behind our denominational building boundary and not being a Missionary Church, a Church "that goes out and makes disciples of all".

Becoming a Missionary Parish

During the time of the consultation, work was undertaken on how best the parish might change to bring the full power of Christian faith to bear in the parish. Many parishioners wished to have a Mission identity moving forward that represented the teachings contained in the bible and to bring biblical teaching into parish life and to drive all parish activity through evangelisation, biblical teaching and Catholic Social Teaching. The need was for this Missionary approach to be practical; to be true; with real conviction and credence.

There was a need to take seriously the two great commandments and also the Mission given to us by Christ:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with your entire mind and love your neighbour as yourself." (Luke chapter 10 verse 27.)

And

"And Jesus came and said to them (the disciples), "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of age". (Matthew chapter 28 verses 18-20.)

Many realised that the parish needed to be renewed and to wake up to the demands placed on a Christian Community. A community needs to be awake to the needs of modern life, to be flexible and responsive to change and, as Christians, to be able to react and shape a community that reaches out to all and lives out the Gospel.

A number of people highlighted how this also fitted in with Bishop Richard's message on Mission, prayer life, understanding scripture, reflection and outreach.

Linked to this was the need to renew our relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and to have a healthy prayer, scriptural, sacramental and liturgical lifestyle. Many parishioners recognised that without this healthy

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Christian lifestyle and value set, it would be difficult to provide the necessary pastoral response and outreach to others. Many mentioned the need to be evangelised ourselves before we evangelised others.

There is a need to make our Christian faith real and pertinent in the 21st Century.

Sunday Liturgy

Parishioners wish to have a good and well thought out liturgy. A liturgy that will harness the traditional with the modern and is welcoming to all ages.

There was a concern about the lack of modern music settings and recognition that there might be a need for specific liturgies to meet specific need.

Many feel that an amazing Sunday experience would include:

- being known and welcomed;
- inspiring homiletics;
- a worshipping experience that gave a clear message;
- my response to a call from God
- the feeling of wanting to go out and tell others
- an encounter with Christ
- authentic
- connecting the sacred and the human
- to feel God's grace
- everyone fully participates
- a reverence from everyone to the place you are in
- high quality music
- powerful liturgy
- to pray and respond in a clear way
- no rush to leave
- to feel transformed
- to feel that Jesus changed my life
- family friendly
- socialise afterwards and not rush off
- good children's liturgy which allowed parents to feel able to let their children go to their own liturgy and for parents to remain with the main body of the community during the Eucharistic Celebration

The clear message was that our liturgy needs renewal and there is a place for new and old, modern and traditional.

Prayer Life, Adoration and Benediction

The need for a prayer life, to pray before the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction and other traditions of the church are not understood by everyone/many.

However, there is a clear demand from a number of parishioners for the traditions of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, Novena, praying the Rosary and Stations of the Cross. For a number these are seen as

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important devotions. For others they have no knowledge or understanding of their purpose and are therefore unaware. For some a conscious decision is taken not to be involved in these church liturgies.

The parish does have an active Women's Prayer Group; a regular Friday evening Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament devotion and a Rosary Group that meets regularly.

For many who took part there is no active prayer life or an understanding of devotions outside of the Mass. Again there is a need for parish renewal in these areas.

Sacraments

There is a clear message from within the parish that Sacramental preparation is seen as a catch all update to Christian life and responsibility and in many cases a personal means to an end rather than the deep desire to receive the Sacrament out of a deep understanding of Christian teaching.

A number of parishioners felt that whilst many were catechised and prepared well for the Sacraments too few had been evangelised and truly understood the Kerygma, also many who received Sacraments had little or no feeling of "belonging" and, as a result, very quickly a substantial number of people who had received the Sacraments were very rarely seen (until the next Sacrament was required).

For example:

In the case of baptism – some see the sacrament as solely a means of obtaining a place in a Catholic school;

In the case of Reconciliation and First Communion a means to a secondary school place;

A number of parishioners felt that this whole area of parish life needs a root and branch review to ensure that before anyone received a Sacrament there was an understanding of the Kerygma, that each person did feel evangelised and that they felt a sense of belonging within the community.

Pastoral Life

This covers the doing and going out elements of parish life.

It is very clear there is a desire by many to become a look out for rather than a take care of parish.

If you look out for people, you take care of the community from birth to death and all of life events; "I keep my eyes and, ears open and I offer support when needed". For many there is a wish to be proactive rather than reactive to events and whilst an individual's privacy is accepted there is a desire to make sure we have a structure in place to reach out both within and outside our community.

The parish are already involved in support activity. However our Mission to "go and make disciples of all nations" means for many parishioners that we should strengthen this area of parish life. Reference was made to how we as a parish should adopt and demonstrate our commitment to the Corporal Acts and Spiritual Works of Mercy.

A number of parishioners made reference to who we should look after. For example:

the sick, the housebound, the lonely, the marginalised, immigrants (Heathrow detention centres); prisoners (local prison liaison), the mentally ill.

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There is a need to look at how best we can provide pastoral care to all and to reach out to the wider community. This includes a healthy and varied social life and activities not just for the parish community but also to offer this programme to the wider community.

Administration support

There is a need to provide administration and clerical support across the week to support parish life. The current Monday and Thursday office support needs extending to the full five days.

Communication

The community fails to exploit and utilise current technologies and social media to communicate effectively with all social groups and ages.

Moving forward the parish need to be more minded to using technology and social media (and any new ways to communicate) to communicate the message of God.

A call from many parishioners was also made to use technology during the Mass and other services as a communication aid.

The Parish School and the Wider Community

The school is and continues to be a focus of parish life which is seen by many as essential. However, there is a concern at the lack of involvement in parish life by so many families who form part of the school community

The issue which is highlighted by the school is a wider issue that needs some careful thought. There are likely to be 3,000 Christians who, if asked, would say they are Catholic living within the parish who are not regular participants in parish life. We have to find a way of reaching out to all of these people.

Pope Francis put the issue into perspective when he said:

“It is true that going out on the street implies the risk of accidents happening, as they would to any ordinary man or woman. But if the church stays wrapped up in it, it will age. And if I had to choose between a wounded church that goes out on the streets and a sick, withdrawn church, I would definitely choose the first one.”

Plant and Equipment

This area of consultation was the most contentious. Over a period of time parishioners had been made aware of problems and issues within the parish, building, equipment and plant, most of which was and still is about affordability within the constraints of our financial position. However, by looking at the needs of the next 100 years and what the parish might look like, Bishop Richard, has given true leadership and a wonderful direction as to what is needed to fulfil Christ's Mission. This Mission was given to each and every one of us by Christ as was the need to demonstrate good stewardship. In the consultation parishioners generally fell into four groups:

1. Those who came to a personal view/conclusion as to the needs of the parish based on what the future parish need was.

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2. Those who had a preference for the *status quo* i.e. do nothing. They, however, recognised that to do nothing would be to the detriment of the parish and to keep the level of existing buildings and equipment was not feasible.
3. Those who under no circumstances wished for the current level of buildings and equipment to fundamentally change.
4. Those who had little or no opinion on the topic.

Overall the parish had a clear preference to move to a single site parish focal point. This would be a sustainable site from which all parish activity would be focused and outreach could take place to the wider community. The current two site parish approach results in a lack of focus and is unsustainable. It is recognised that having two sites is a huge distraction in moving forward to becoming a Missionary church and fulfilling the Great Commission from Jesus Christ. Continuing with two sites demonstrates poor stewardship and will lead to the parish continuing as a maintenance church where the focus is on property and its maintenance and not the Mission of the church. The view of the Finance Team is that the parish is unable to continue to finance the running of the two sites and whilst costs increase the financial contribution made by everyone is decreasing for a number of reasons – not least the ageing congregation and a reduction in people's disposable income.

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List of Groups who participated/ were represented

- Finance Committee
- Pastoral Group
- School Governors and Staff
- School Parents and Guardians
- Altar Servers
- Sacristans
- Laundry Group
- Flower Group
- Welcomers
- Extraordinary Ministers of Communion
- Readers
- Musicians and Music Groups
- Children's Liturgy Group
- Office Staff
- Knit and Natter
- Mother's Prayers
- Baptism Preparation Groups
- Confirmation Group
- Reconciliation and First Communion Groups
- Parish Catechists
- Parish Care, CAFOD and Social Action
- Young People of school age
- Individual parishioners/ families
- Parish Clergy
- "Resting" Parishioners
- Parish Open Meetings