

Synod Meeting minutes

Sunday 3rd April 2022, 10 am – 11 am

Trinity Church, Westhill

Summary of the main ideas discussed:

Theme 4 Celebration

- “Journeying together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass).
- How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and guide our community?

It was noted that there are differences when the celebration of Mass is in a small parish compared to a big parish/Cathedral, and that creating the atmosphere in the church can really help with the celebration. The music and singing in the celebration of Mass play a valuable part in this inspiration. It was suggested that maybe once a month to play the organ at our parish. The use of both traditional hymns and current worship songs would add to the celebration too. Maybe a DVD of music could be played, if there were no musicians available?

- How well do we enable every faithful to participate in liturgical celebrations?
- How are we encouraging and helping the members of our community who wish to take in the ministries of the reader and acolyte?

Pre-COVID, parishioners could also participate in the celebration of the Mass through helping with the bidding prayers; the bringing up of the gifts of bread and wine to the altar; and helping with the offertory baskets.

We have a Reading Rota on the noticeboard and we encourage anyone who wishes to help with the readings at Mass to put their names down. Those who have gifts in music and singing are encouraged to help at the 9 am Mass when we have music. The youth are invited to help with altar serving. There are also opportunities to help within the parish through: the Children’s Liturgy on a Sunday morning, Sacramental preparation classes, organising the flowers for the church and helping to set up the Church for Mass.

- How could we do better?

We could find out who the Catholics are in the Westhill area and reach out to them by personally inviting them back to the Mass. We could put an appeal in the parish newsletter, and this could help reach those who haven’t yet returned to the celebration of Mass in our church building. We could do a Parish census.

When we had Tea & Coffees after Mass (pre-COVID), this was a great way to get together with our parish community. We also had various fundraisers during the year which helped bring our parishioners together. These are things we can bring back as rules relax, and this could help the sense of community in our parish.

It was suggested that having a Youth Mass maybe once a month, would help to encourage the youth of our parish to get more involved and attend Mass. More thoughts and ideas are needed to see how else we can encourage the youth back. Maybe setting up a zoom call chat with them in the first instance and listening to their ideas?

There is a Youth Mission with NET Ministries happening on 20th May at St Mary's Cathedral. We could encourage the youth at our parish to attend this mission together.

We also have our First Holy Communion Mass coming up on 7th May, and the children will be involved in saying the readings, bidding prayers and bringing up of the gifts of bread and wine.

It was also suggested that maybe an Ecumenical approach to get all the youth together would help. There is the Holiday Bible Club during the summer holidays, organised by the Church of Scotland and Westhill Community Church, which invites all the children in the Westhill area together for a fun week of learning about Jesus. Parents and parishioners are encouraged to volunteer their help where they can.

It was strongly felt that having the 5 pm Vigil Mass and the 9 am Mass over the weekend was splitting our parish community. 'The clock' seems to be stopping people from attending the 9 am Mass.

The question was asked what were our parish's numbers versus the Church of Scotland and the Westhill Community Church?

It was suggested that perhaps having a 'Mission week' at our parish, with daily Mass and talks, might be something that could help bring people back.

Also, maybe having a Parish Council for Westhill parish would be helpful.

Theme 7 Ecumenism

- The dialogue with other Christian communities, united with us by one Baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.
- What relations do we have with the brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations?
- What do we share and how do we journey together? What are the benefits and the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

Our parish is unique because we share the church building with the Church of Scotland.

We have been sharing our Lenten journey together through the Lenten Lunches & talks, with the Church of Scotland and Westhill Community Church. In the past, we also did a joint Passover celebration. We will, for the first time, be having an Ecumenical service on Good Friday.

There are difficulties in getting people to come along to these events. We also have to be mindful of interfaith sensitivities.