



Many thanks to everyone who engaged with synod so far, whether online, on paper, or simply in conversation with others. The intention from the start was that responses to the questionnaire returned via the parishes of St Ann's and St Quivox would be used to look at the life of our parishes before sending them to the Diocese.

Opinions varied greatly, and it clear that different people are looking for different things and have different concerns, but there were certain themes that recurred. One such concern was the absence of **young people** from the church. Many voiced a concern that the young were being left behind, although this was generally a concern of parishioners in the higher age brackets rather than of young people themselves, who, in general demonstrate little interest in engaging with the church. No teenagers replied to the questionnaire, and only a couple of people under forty-five. Queen Margaret Academy is currently engaging with young people, looking at their relationship with church and faith, which will hopefully shed some light on their absence from parish communities.

Of the other groups people feel are 'getting left behind', **the sick, the elderly and the housebound** were frequently mentioned. In many cases Covid has exacerbated their sense of isolation and loneliness, and many people feel this is something that should be addressed. Several suggestions were made around how we as a parish community may reach out to those at home and these will be explored over the next few weeks and months.

Not everyone sees the parish as a potential hub for **social activity**, but many do recognise that a sense of community is an essential element of any church, and that social as well as liturgical events can play an important role in building up relationships within a parish.

Issues around **Equality** were raised, from the dominant role of clergy and the lack of respect for women in the church to the ease with which people feel they can become involved in parish life at a level which is comfortable for them. The lack of a formal parish council was mentioned in this regard.

The importance of good **communication** was another theme that recurred in your responses, along with a forum that allows wide participation in the discussion, organising and planning of how the parish wants to shape, develop and grow. The need for an opportunity for sharing ideas and experiences that is open to everyone was highlighted on a number of occasions. Traditionally that has been attempted within a Parish Pastoral Council, however we are aware of other models that could perhaps also address the needs expressed in the feedback. One suggestion that is being explored is to have parish meetings a couple of times a year to which **everyone** will be invited. The format will be refined nearer the first meeting in the summer, but is likely to follow the pattern of prayer, then tea and chat in groups and a period of feedback from the groups.

Your feedback consistently identified different ideas around how people can **participate**. Several parishioners identified frustrations around the same people doing everything and others noticed that new people seemed to have become more involved since lockdown. This highlights a tension within the parish around a reluctance or reticence from some parishioners to offer their services, instead believing it more appropriate to wait for a member of the clergy to seek them out. Conversely there were a number of respondents who voiced a desire for a model of church that was less clergy dominant. This second idea of church appears to be one that Pope Francis is advocating in this Synod.

Your responses have provided a number of ideas to explore as we move forwards with the synod and will be invaluable in developing a vision for our parishes. On an immediate level there are things that can be implemented right now, without waiting for any further stages of the Synod process.

"Sign-up Sunday" provides everyone an equal opportunity to think about what you would like see happening in the church and decide how you want to part of in our parish. The prepared list of suggested groups and activities is far from exhaustive and there is also an invitation for you to promote new ways to engage with each other and with the wider community. For those who are looking for a personal invitation to join groups and ministries, please accept this as such an **invitation**, no one is more important than you are in making this parish the kind of community you want it to be.

Thank you once again for engaging with the synod. It has helped us take a big step forward recognising where we can grow as a parish community and providing a direction in which we can fruitfully continue to grow.

Karen McGahon & Lesley-Anne Pratchett