

## St Catherine's Parish Survey – 10 Key Themes

### 1. A good cross-section of people responded

Our Parish Survey was conducted in May 2021, attracting 104 respondents – a healthy proportion of our weekly congregation – as many were done by one family member rather than multiple individuals within the same family.

Parishioner age profile is older, but younger than many parishes.

- 48% check out the Parish website regularly, highlighting the importance of digital communication to our parishioners.
- 16% are involved in Parish groups – suggesting that the vast majority are not actively engaged with parish activities (this may well be COVID-related as many groups are not currently active).
- 43% were watching the weekly online Mass, but half of these also went to Mass each week. 40% of those who watch the online Mass don't visit the church at all (mainly due to health concerns, but also due to work commitments for some).

### 2. St Catherine's has clear strengths

Key themes that came through consistently throughout the survey were as follows; the sense of community; our accessible and hard-working priests; the friendly welcome and family-oriented approach.

### 3. People feel part of a friendly, welcoming community

Almost 9/10 say that they feel part of the community. The work of the priests is a key element of what makes the Parish so special to them. The willingness to offer support, particularly over the past year, was also highlighted. Plus, the family feel and that there are plenty of groups and activities available within the Parish. A low proportion of responses did not feel part of the community and reasons were disparate; Being new to the parish (especially challenging with the lockdown restrictions); Children attending different schools; Limited time available to meet other people; Not fully inclusive (to minority groups); Only attending Mass at St Catherine's on an occasional basis.

### 4. St Catherine's is a family-oriented parish

It's clear that St Catherine's is seen as a family-oriented parish; Mix of ages- not just one age group; Involvement from children and young people is actively encouraged; Strong links with our schools - especially for younger families; Thriving children's liturgy group is valued.

### 5. Many volunteers have offered to support parish life

Overall, 70% expressed a willingness to help. Most are willing to help on an ad hoc basis, but others are happy to do more. Some of the people offering help are already actively volunteering, but we also had some new names which will greatly help the workload in the parish. Volunteer names and details have been collated and they will be contacted in due course. Additional volunteers are ALWAYS welcome.

### 6. More opportunities for social interaction were sought

One of the biggest suggested improvements was to provide more opportunities for parishioners to get to know each other socially. Over half would like to see more chances for parishioners to socialise. This has been particularly impacted by the pandemic (formal as well as informal occasions). The re-opening of the Community Centre brings opportunities. A third of people also wanted to see more fundraising and support for good causes, which could be linked to this. The pandemic has brought social distancing not social interaction but as we emerge from this period we need to encourage more chances for parishioners to mix socially.

### **7. More engagement with other churches and faiths would be welcomed**

Over 4 out of 10 people wanted to see more engagement with other Christian churches and other faiths in the local area. Younger parishioners in particular were interested. This represents an area of real opportunity post-pandemic.

### **8. More resources and support for families and young people were requested**

Around 4 out of 10 people wanted to see more resources and support for children and young people in the parish as well as the development of closer links with both schools (particularly The Barlow).

### **9. There was interest in some of the more progressive improvements**

Contactless payment stands at entrance/exit for collections and donations – mentioned by a third of people (32%), Large screens in church to display hymns and Mass sheets -mentioned by a quarter of people (25%).

### **10. Online Masses have been popular but support for retaining them is mixed**

Online Masses have been very popular amongst parishioners and almost half of respondents (46%) would like to see them continue. 13% were firmly against this, the remainder said they had no preference. 43% of people say they watched the online Masses each week, but of these, around half were also attending Mass each week. Some expressed concern that discontinuing the Masses would impact the sick, elderly or housebound who have found these services particularly useful.

Almost 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s said they would be willing to contribute towards the cost of setting up a dedicated system for online Masses. People were evenly split between whether they; a) Wanted pre-recorded Masses to continue; b) preferred a live-streaming system set up c) Had no preference. This suggests that the final decision needs to come after further consideration, although given that there are many other online Masses available, we need to question the perceived value for money, even if specific funds are raised by parishioners. Unfortunately, none of the people volunteering their time was able to offer video-editing skills – making the option of a pre-recorded and edited Mass very unlikely.

## **Summary and Next Steps**

There are plenty of strengths and opportunities which can be built upon. The pandemic has brought huge challenges, but we have the chance to make changes in how we think, behave and work together to build a stronger community.

- Our community is a core strength - how do we harness its collective potential to live out our faith more visibly through our actions?
- How do we maintain our welcoming and friendly feel within the parish to ensure that our welcome is truly universal and recognised by all?
- We need to recognise the value of parish volunteers and ensure their efforts are used to make a difference

Online Masses have been a success, but do we continue?

- They have brought comfort to many, but are they a priority, given cost and limit on resources?
- Televised masses are available from other parishes (and the Cathedral), but what can St Catherine's offer, perhaps on a less regular basis?

**Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the survey.**