

Analysis of St. Joseph's Parish, Peebles - Autumn 2015

It is a useful exercise for any of us to occasionally stop, take stock and reflect about our lives and then in a positive manner assess what we want our way forward to be. In a similar way it is important that we, as a parish community, assess what we have and then what we want to achieve in the future. We share a common purpose and a common goal - the love of God and the establishment of His kingdom here on earth. Pope Francis states in his document *Evangelii Gaudium*, 33

"I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of re-thinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities."

What Do St. Joseph's Have Now in the Autumn of 2015?

1. We have a resident Priest.

2. We have a Church, Parish House, a Hall and a Cottage. The first three are in good condition and with an on-going maintenance programme. The cottage is weather proof but a lot of work needs to be done to make it habitable. The Hall, St. Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre, is available for church and community use.

3. Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Life - Liturgy

There is a good involvement of parishioners in key areas of liturgy: Altar servers, Care of altar linen and hangings, church Cleaners, Flower arrangers, Ministers of the Eucharist, Music group, Organist, Readers, Sacristans, Repository Stall, Welcomers, Bereavement Team, annual Memorial Mass or Service for the dead and those who mourn.

4. Ministry of Education and Formation.

Halyrude RC Primary School serves the whole of Tweeddale and caters for catholic and non catholic children from the ages of 5-12 years. The Parish has a representative on the School Council. Interchange of Parish and School Newsletters. Our Children's Liturgy Group is increasing in numbers and is organised by a group of parishioners. RCIA team has been formed recently.

5. Church in the World.

Involvement with Peebles Council of Churches, Christian Aid, Jericho House, SCIA

6. Ministry of Administration and Stewardship

A Parish Pastoral Council, Finance Group, Maintenance Team, Fund-Raising Team, regular charitable collections stipulated by the Church, Safeguarding, Social Teams, Parish Handbook online but hard copy due to be published. Weekly Newsletter.

Where Do We Go From Here? - Your suggestions and comments from parishioners as the result of the recent on-going Parish Survey are as follows:

1. Priest

“Vital to retain St. Joseph’s Parish with or without a resident priest. People will **not** travel over ten miles, for reasons of time, travel arrangements, expense and feeling “outsiders...will simply drop away”.

“Decline in church attendance shows no sign of stopping”

“Peebles have had a number of missionary priests over last eight years who have been asked to get on with it without any induction or on-going help in adjusting to the Scottish church and being part of a network of support and knowledge.”

“Priests have been here on a temporary basis but our church leaders have not once acknowledged that we are in their thoughts.”

2. Buildings

“Need an improvement plan for all church properties, grounds, walls and fences.

“Grass is looked after but church gardens in a dismal state. What about a one off professional tidy up?”

3. Ministry of Worship and Spiritual Life.

“It is both vital and urgent that people are trained in faith formation and in the conducting of services when no resident priest.”

“I have heard that in the event of no priest, Eucharistic Ministers are not now allowed to hold communion services. What services can we do?”

“Twice a year have the youth prepare a Mass or a service of their choice (with support)”

“Can we have specific services for special times of the year for example: evening vigil in November to pray for our deceased, in June have Corpus Christie procession with the children.”

“Develop prayer life in community.”

“Have an annual plan of Parish liturgical services, inter church services, school events so that maximum advertising and involvement can be encouraged”

“More coordination of parish celebrations, sacraments and feasts so that the liturgy is best presented and people involved are better prepared even simple things like audibility .”

“Establish a group to visit the sick and lonely, another to visit new parishioners, get buddies for returning Catholics”

“Children’s Liturgy Group is strong at present. How do we support it to be even stronger. An arm for a Youth Group?”

“Forward Planning for Main Feasts, Sacraments and Celebrations - a co-ordinated proactive approach is needed with plans produced and shared in advance so that everyone involved is clear about who is doing what and when

“There is a need to improve the quality of our church experience – preparation seems to be haphazard.”

“St Joseph’s is the senior parish church (numbers) and the main services at Christmas and Easter should be held in this Church.”

“Our Church needs visibility both nationally and locally. We have been too inward looking and not outgoing enough.”

4. Ministry of Education and Formation

“The Parish is a unit of the Church through which the Gospel is transmitted first to the faithful and then to those who do not (yet) have faith. This requires support from priests. The laity needs to be empowered (not power)”

“Our primary school need to be more part of our Parish. Joint celebrations?”

“Young people are drifting away from church and no longer hear the truth of the gospel or learn truths about morality, life and relationships. We need people trained in Youth Ministry”

“Lack of RC education at secondary stage”

“Find new ways of engaging young families. Should be Family – Church – School connection”

“Parishioners give more support to School events. School Newsletter availability to parishioners.” (in hand)

“Establish a register of parishioners. Emails for swift dissemination of urgent information – this will also serve to hold on to drifting parishioners”

“Establish a small Communication Group to sift through publications and leaflets”

“Need one or two people to continuously update Parish website.”

“Lack of on-going programme in faith for all parishioners”

5. Church in the World

“Our Church needs positive visibility both nationally and locally.”

“Let us be more outgoing and become a core part of the Joint Churches in Peebles rather than on the periphery”

6. Ministry of Administration and Stewardship.

“We have a Parish Pastoral Council but how many people know who they are?”

“Minutes of PPC should be available in paper copy and on line as soon as possible after a PPC meeting”

“Parish Newsletter is good but not enough”

“Parishioners are not aware of national, diocesan and deanery events.”

“If we are to reach as many active and non active Catholics as possible we need to review how we communicate.”

“Decline in numbers of young families remaining part of the congregation.”

“It seems a long time since the Parish received a full Financial Report.”

“We are a small parish and outside of weekly Mass should we not be spending more time together? We need to experience the joy of being together and sharing with others.”

Other Comments

“The Archdiocese seems to be a unit of the Church which serves the Archbishop and the clergy.”

“With potential new parish model there needs to be better communication between the Archdiocese and parish groups.”

WHAT NEXT and WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

First of all **Thank you** to all those people who already give their time and expertise to our parish. There is a lot that can still be done and we always need more help.

All your comments and suggestions will be taken into account in due course but for the next six months we have identified two areas of priority:

Liturgy and Communication

After reflecting on the suggestions that you, the parishioners, have made it is clear that you would like our Liturgy to be better organised. People in their various areas of responsibility eg. music, readers, sacristans etc. are doing a good job but we do need more communication and coordination between the different ministries. We need someone who, together with the priest, has an overview of not only our weekend Masses but also services planned for the forthcoming 6/12 months within our own church, the town and the arch-diocese. This sounds very onerous but the responsibility could be shared.

We need a Liturgy Co ordinator/s. Can you help?

We have made recommendations regarding "communication" to the Parish Pastoral Council but the Parish needs at present:

- a) **Someone who is willing to regularly update the parish website and notice boards.**
- b) **Someone who would work with Kirsty Kondol and sift through the diary, incoming mail, leaflets, notifications etc and highlight appropriately forthcoming meetings and events happening in the parish, local community and diocese.**

If after reading this report you would like to comment or, more importantly, to offer your help to build up our parish, please do so by contacting Fr Wojceich or a member of the Parish Pastoral Council.