

GOOD SHEPHERD CHURCH

MYTHOLMROYD

DIOCESE OF LEEDS

2018 PARISH REVIEW REPORT

The review was carried out over three weeks in June 2018. There were 51 responses. This represents a response rate of approximately 60% of adult members attending at that time.

The report is divided into three sections:

- 1. Main summary report**
- 2. Appendix A Graphs showing number of responses for each category**
- 3. Appendix B All written responses (verbatim)**

It is hoped that the findings of this review will lead to improving the community here at the Good Shepherd. Many of the possible actions and developments areas will be achieved relatively speedily while other areas are longer term in nature.

Thanks must go to all who contributed to the review and especially to the many who clearly took time to think about the issues covered.

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Summary of the Report

LITURGY / PARALITURGY

MUSIC

Generally very positive comments especially regarding the music group whose skills and commitment are appreciated. There is some difference of opinion on the issue of “traditional “ hymns not being used as much as some would like. The relevance to the Liturgical season is very much appreciated. The range of musicians we have across the weeks is highly valued as are the differing approaches eg organ and music group. A note of caution is that it can be difficult to staff each week and so additional help is an ongoing issue.

Issues for the Liturgy Group:

- *How can we practice new hymns? How often etc*
- *A broader range of Mass Settings may be an improvement.*

HOMILY

This section received a large number of comments. This clearly brings out the importance of the homily to parishioners and the desire to gain something from it to integrate into their lives. The written comments have been passed to Fr Malachy and Fr John. They appreciate the honesty and helpful nature of these.

A large majority felt that the homily was read to them as an essay rather than speaking to them. Although the theological content was good they wanted the homily to more relevant to their daily lives in the 21st century. People desired challenge and suggestions for living out their lives. Many suggestions were given for enhancing the experience of the homily.

Issues for the homily

- *To reflect on how best to deliver effective homilies*
- *Relate to the everyday lives of people*

LAY PARTICIPATION

There was a perception that a few people did a lot - the scope needs to be widened. Related to this there was some concern that people were willing to develop their participation but needed more encouragement. It is clear that we need to develop easier / more effective ways that will bring people into a more active role.

We have to be careful not to downgrade the perception of active participation – it was commented that at the recent Organ and flower Festival over 60 people participated in one way or another. Similarly the individual participation of parishioners in charitable causes (in and out of parish context) is large. The main concern related to weekly / monthly activities eg rotas. There was some concern about lack of servers. Hopefully this is a demographic issue ie our youngsters are slightly too young as yet and there is hope in the near future that this could improve.

Issues for lay participation

- *To increase participation particularly of younger parishioners (below age 60?)*
- *Look at ways this can be achieved*
- *Encourage altar server programme*

ATMOSPHERE IN THE CHURCH

Most respondents felt that there is a welcoming inclusive atmosphere and that this should also come from the celebrant with a formal welcome at the beginning of Masses..

The issue of noise before and after Sunday continues to concern some. It is an important time for many and the design of the worship space makes any noise travel the short distance to worshippers. (3 comments that there is too much noise before Mass). Perhaps further strategies to cut down the effects of conversations might have to be looked at.

Issues to follow up:

- *Formal welcome from the sanctuary*
- *Explore further how to create reflective feel before and after Mass*
- *Look at the book distribution / position of welcomers*

DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUALITY / ADULT FAITH EDUCATION

There is a concern that this development is in danger of not being continued. It relies on Fr John at present.

Where are the discussion groups, prayer groups, courses, speakers? These have been active up to quite recently. There was a clear desire for further initiatives

There is the sense of a need and desire to grow in spirituality beyond the normal Liturgical events eg Mass. The comments that some of these services (notably Penitential Services) have not been imaginative enough and using only the formal liturgical text is not engaging some people. There has been a noticeable decline in attendance at these of late. Linking these to world / local events and the lives of people could be explored. The community have a responsibility here as well as the clergy. There was that a liturgy group could look at the provision of services during the year – not just Mass. The broader provision of services eg Penitential services, holy hour, Benediction, and others.

Great concern that this is so reliant on Fr John and what will happen when he is no longer available. Without Fr John there is no adult faith education in the parish.

There is appreciation for Fr Larkin's generosity of spirit in continuing to use Fr John's support to enhance our spiritual wellbeing.

There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in our community and it need not rest with the clerical leadership who have many calls on their time.

Issues to explore:

- *Look to expand the number of people who could offer spiritual / faith development*
- *Preparing services – lay participation opportunities should be developed*

CHILDREN - FAITH DEVELOPMENT

There is a widespread appreciation of the work involved in the Children's Liturgy of the Word group and leaders.

It is definitely seen as a strength for the parish. Some respondents are unclear of some details of their planning and work. It could be alleviated by feedback to parishioners on dedicated display boards or via the newsletter.

Apart from the Children's Liturgy though there was a concern that there is more to do outside of the Mass context.

Issues for work with children:

- *Promote / inform / advertise the Children's liturgy in a wider format*
- *Create a dedicated space / noticeboard for work to be displayed formally*
- *Further non-Mass activities to be explored*

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Respondents recognised that there is clearly good preparation for First Sacraments (Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation) – usually of younger members. What is clear from the responses was that there was a lack of concrete information eg what is taught, by whom, when? Etc

Some respondents were not clear what was meant by this section. Most focus was on the preparation of children. Very little was commented (or known?) regarding preparation for any adults eg marriage, sacrament of the sick. There is a clear overlap between this issue and Faith Developments for the adult members of our community. How much have we learned about our faith since we left formal education? What were the contexts for any further learning that we have experienced?

There was concern that no annual retreat for Eucharistic Ministers has taken place this year. Perhaps this is a wider issue of a lack of ongoing faith development.

Issues for Sacramental Preparation:

- *Publicise (on dedicated noticeboard) the work of First Sacramental preparation eg schemes of work*
- *Publicise Deanery led sacramental schemes eg Confirmation, Marriage that already take place*
- *Integrate planning for faith / spiritual development elements of sacramental understanding*

MASS TIMES / WEEKDAY MASS PROVISION / HOUSE MASSES

This section had the largest number of responses. (34 out of total survey returns of 50 made written comments)

SUNDAY MASS

There is still an underlying unhappiness about Mass timings and provision among some respondents. Whether this is a significant minority or a majority is difficult to assess. . There was a strong feeling that timing of Sunday Mass needs to be reconsidered with a more flexible approach. A review that was promised is regarded as not having taken place. There was some feeling that the widespread nature of the parish boundaries has not been considered – particularly for older people getting ready for Sunday morning Mass and its longer travelling times – if public transport is involved.

MIDWEEK MASSES, including Saturday,

Some responses indicate that these might need to be reconsidered - in terms of attendance.

It was felt that the presence of Mass at the Good Shepherd should be enhanced. Although attendance when it is offered is distinctly patchy!

HOUSE MASSES

These are appreciated very much by those who take part. It is seen as a valid pastoral response to needs of some – particularly the flexible times of Mass – to suit hosts and participants – no early starts. It is also seen as a good initiative even by those who do not attend – as a sign of outreach. There is some concern that it should have a wider scope widen scope.

Issues for Mass Provision

- *Review the provision of Sunday mass time – perhaps in conjunction with Sacred Heart and St Patrick's Sowerby Bridge*
- *Reassess provision of Saturday Mass in light of low attendance*
- *Strategy for widening scope / coverage of House Mass initiative*

COMMUNICATION

This is an interesting finding of the review – that although we are a small community the knowledge of what takes place on a range of levels and contexts is limited among a significant number of our community. There are a range of methods that are adopted by Good Shepherd parish to communicate: Bulletin / Newsletter, Email Contact list, Facebook group, Word of mouth, Posters in church , Noticeboards

PARISH NEWSLETTER / BULLETIN

This appears to be the main and for some – the most effective method of finding out what is happening. It is very much appreciated, containing very useful information – parish and local community settings. It is often for many the only connection to the Halifax Deanery and the Diocese of Leeds. It is seen as readable and attractive. Interestingly one comment suggested that it had too much information!

EMAIL

Very useful for those able to access but still occasional minor difficulties. It is to be seen as one method of communication but not the only one. It was seen as particularly effective for those who cannot get to church every week or who have been ill. A good use of technology for the housebound. We need to check that all who can use it know of its existence.

Communication Issue to follow up:

- *Regularly check that newcomers are aware of the service.*

DISPLAY / NOTICEBOARDS

Addition of new noticeboard space was welcomed. Generally thought that need more noticeboard space. The wide variety of parish activities are still not reflected. Perhaps the use of space for awareness raising and passing on information needs to be examined. Accessible information for visitors and newcomers was mentioned.

Communication Issues to follow up:

- *Give more information on boards – requested elsewhere in the review*
- *Examine the whole display context – for more effective use – across the building*

PARISH FINANCE

It was recognised that the financial oversight by the Finance Group (committee) was efficient. However respondents felt they knew very little about the finances of the parish. How can we be more transparent? Suggestions of more regular “big picture” updates came from several parishioners. It was appreciated that weekly information was given but that this only gave small scale information. Issues such as How much the parish has in accounts overall, how much we give to charities, how much is specifically give to support refugees from the parish house etc

Communication Issues to develop for Finance:

- *More regular updates giving wider picture of financial situation*
- *Compilation of charitable giving*
- *Specifics on refugee support*

HALIFAX DEANERY

There was a general feeling that GS does not feel part of or have enough links with Deanery. Comments about a lack of progress and leadership since the Deanery reorganisation. The hopes of some have not been realised. Some criticism of the leadership of clergy across the deanery in terms of attendance (or lack of) at meetings. How can lay people be expected to take part if their leaders did not show full support. Is there too much focus on our own parishes at the expense of a deanery approach?

DIOCESE OF LEEDS

Again, a feeling of disconnect. Concern as to how information is passed on to us. The parish bulletin was seen as the main connection and form of communication. Some respondents wanted more information on events etc – via the bulletin.. The reliance on parish clergy to disseminate information from the diocese could be seen to be a limiting factor as they effectively become the gatekeepers of any information intended to be passed on. Should this role be widened to lay members?

Communication Issues for Deanery/Diocesan communication:

- *Ensure regular feedback of Deanery events*
- *Publicise GS events more regularly to rest of Halifax Deanery*
- *Design events which apply to Deanery as well as parish context*
- *Ensure regular feedback of Diocesan events / information*

CONSULTORS TEAM

There was a lot of appreciation of the work done by Consultors. There is however a desire for more information and respondents would welcome more openness, minutes, outcomes, and even information about the make-up of the team. Some felt that they were definitely overworked.

A few respondents felt the need for the function of the Consultors group to be discussed. Is there a / should there be a spiritual element to their work as leaders in the parish? Consultors should not simply be “doers” but rather be concerned with a vision for the parish.

There was some concern that the group were not challenging enough – “good management team is to support **and** challenge!” Concern was mentioned that the

Communication Issues for Consultors:

- *Give more clear and regular feedback regarding discussion / decisions*
- *Examine the role of Consultors regarding direction of parish socially, spiritually – perhaps less dealing with minutiae.*

PARISH WEBSITE

There were a lot of passionate comments in this section. All were agreed that there is much to improve. What was interesting was the idea that parishioners would have input into this. There was no knowledge of who organises the site.

ACCESSIBLE FOR VISITORS

Respondents generally felt that it was not very useful, it gave little information about the life of the parish. It needs to be up to date and modern looking. For visitors it presented a problem of navigation. If Mass times were sought after there was only an indirect route via the bulletin.

ATTRACTIVE / APPEALING

It was described as static and unappealing. It gives no sense of the life of the parish. No sense of joy and not outward looking. The Rather “Americanised Jesus” was not felt to represent Good Shepherd in the West Yorkshire context – rather the more fitting for American Plains.

There was regret that much more was not made of the beauty of the Good Shepherd building itself – its symbolism, windows, artefacts.

REPRESENTATIVE OF PARISH LIFE

What follows are some comments to give a flavour of expectations:

It needs pages for different areas of parish life. It currently fails to show our activities other than via the parish bulletin so it’s hard to gauge what sort of parish it is. At present it is limited and doesn’t reflect our community, who we are and what we are.

Perhaps this is a job for a group of young people??

It does not reflect the warmth of the parish or its vibrancy. There is no mention of the Good Shepherd Mission Statement We are working towards “Live Simply” status and this is presently not referred to in any depth.

The parish needs to advertise what is on offer. Vestibule / good but limited.

Ask the parishioners to contribute their knowledge and experience of the various activities. Testimonials are a powerful way of telling our story.

Very little of parish life is evident. No sense of an outward looking community. No sense of the joy of the Gospel.

Nothing to suggest parish life or how vibrant the parish is. There is clearly enough here for a plan of action.

Issues for development of parish website:

- *reflect the full life of the parish*
- *be accessible to visitors quickly and easily*
- *inform and inspire reflection by use of the Good Shepherd church's symbolism and artefacts (especially windows)*
- *make use of the expertise and knowledge of lay members*

PARISH OUTREACH

INTER-FAITH / INTER CHURCH EVENTS

Respondents felt that what there is was mainly due to the efforts of a few; eg through Christians Together initiatives and meetings information. Change of Mass time had impacted on the ability to work (during Lent) on the Lenten Lunch scheme. How can more people be encouraged to be involved?

CHARITABLE GIVING

Parishioners considered the Good Shepherd community to be a generous church. Donation of rental income from the parish house, Live Simply, Cafod collections, Amnesty International Prisoners, Gianni Project, Refugees, Justice and Peace information, Hope Village.given as examples.

Some clarity / updates requested about amounts (annual?) was seen to help awareness rather than rely on a general feeling.

Issues: to improve outreach

- *To examine the possibility of a summative feedback on (annual?) giving for "home-grown" charitable work as opposed to diocesan led special collections.*
- *Encourage appointment of Interfaith lead person to support present work.*

YOUNG PEOPLE / CHILDREN – PROVISION

This area was felt to be good without complacency. Children's Liturgy carried the most plaudits along with mention of the Yout Group. There was concern over how to engage and retain those over 12 years of age – after the sacramental preparation and pressures of other attractions take place. Some mention was made of a desire to know what actually was covered by groups. As mentioned earlier a formal noticeboard for young members of the parish would help here.

Issues:

- *To publicise activities covered (every month or two)*
- *To publicise Youth Group across the deanery*

PROVISION FOR ELDERLY / CONTACT AND SUPPORT FOR THE ILL

The Luncheon Club is seen by most respondents as very successful for the whole community not just the parish.

Beyond this parishioners are not aware of what else is offered. There is recognition that individuals do offer support to some older people in the locality / parish but this is not formalised or recorded.

At least one respondent mentioned a role for the SVP. However given the distance of any local group this might be difficult – in the short term.

The questions were asked “Do we really reach out?”. “Do we know who needs support or what is needed?” There certainly feels as though some exploration of this area would be a positive thing.

The move to be dementia friendly is seen as a positive step although this is at an early stage.

There is felt that we need a plan. Eg when a person does not attend Sunday Mass for a number of weeks there should be an action plan – particularly if they live alone.

Eucharistic Ministers could play a part – eg leave with the host from Sunday Mass – but this can only be developed as part of a wider knowledge and picture of where there is a need.

There was uncertainty about what the present situation was regarding visits by parish clergy. Some were aware of the role played by Fr J. in visiting the sick and dying but this was informal. There was uncertainty about the role of Fr L here – it may be a case of a low profile. Also how does the priest get to know?

Minibus provision good if needed and allows access for parish activities / events. Further social events to wider group who are supported and less isolated. There is clearly a case for further exploration

Issues for provision / support for the elderly and ill

- *Discover what is being done / by whom*
- *Ascertain any needs locally*
- *Look for areas of good practice in other parishes / communities*

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

There is a lot of uncertainty about this area and what is available or needed. There is some awareness of initial work started. The parish is just beginning to look at this so it is likely that more will happen in the next year or so. The new initiative is welcome to equip interested parties with developing insight / skills etc. Comments make it clear that there is evidence of individuals being supportive and engaging with the bereaved. It is clearly an area for development. And more importantly that there is interest among possible volunteers.

Issues for development:

- *Continue with awareness raising initiative*
- *Liaise with Halifax Deanery to avoid repetition*
- *Decide on further development later*

SOCIAL ASPECT OF PARISH LIFE

WELCOME TO NEWCOMERS / VISITORS

Respondents felt this aspect to be good – as derived from comments given by visitors. A warm atmosphere was the main comment. Several comments mentioned the need for a welcome pack / information handbook for new members or even visitors.

There is common agreement that this is a whole parish concern. There is some sadness that a priest is not there to chat to new visitors after Mass.

SOCIAL EVENTS

There is an awareness of a decrease in parish social events with several suggestions as to why.

Any social gatherings at the moment tend to be in smaller informal groupings eg discussion groups, ad hoc coffee mornings etc

There was a desire to have a more structured programme as people appreciate and need social events to build up relationships as these don't just happen.

Issues for development to improve social aspects:

- *Develop a plan of wide-ranging events across the year*
- *Put these into parish calendar*
- *Search for “leading players” for these – not just regular volunteers*
- *Perhaps look for external acts / players eg local musicians, look at films / poetry?*

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

Generally a lack of knowledge as to what is happening. Many felt unable to comment. This is a significant area as the church of the future. What support there is seems to be on a personal contact / friendship basis. In the past schemes for supporting young families eg babysitting, get-togethers have been offered by Good Shepherd parishioners. Perhaps parents of young families may need to be canvassed as to what their concerns / needs might be.

Issues for development:

- *To ascertain whether there is a role for the Good Shepherd parish*
- *To canvass parents of young families in relation to this area*

REFRESHMENTS AFTER SUNDAY MASS

Overwhelmingly among respondents this was seen very important part of parish life for those who participated in it. Numbers who used the opportunity for a chat and drink were significant – often filling the lounge. It was seen as a place to catch up, plan, pass on information and saved separate gatherings to achieve some ends. Those who used it tended to stay for long periods. It was seen as very good for some elder members of the parish. More people are still needed to help.

PROPERTY – STATE OF BUILDING

EXTERNAL: GARDENS / ORCHARD

There was a general feeling that aspects of the gardens needed to be better maintained but this is now 'in hand'. Individuals were commended for their tending of flower beds and the orchard which are seen as very positive statements of commitment (however small) to God's creation. There was a desire for the Memorial Garden to be made more attractive.

CARPARK

There are many comments about both the use and state of the car park. There is a desire to remain "good neighbours" to the local area. At the same time there is a feeling of this being abused particularly at weekends when church users are not able to access the car park. Measures are in place to restrict use after repairs to the Shoulder of Mutton Car park is completed – very soon. Funerals and daytime services are problematic when non church users park all day.

The issue of flooding still causes annoyance and some respondents comment that this is an ongoing issue with little evidence of improvement.

Issues for improvement

- *Action plan for car park usage – long term*
- *Examination of flooding issue*

INTERNAL: DÉCOR

Respondents are generally pleased with the church interior (worship space) but also a feeling among some that it should be a building which is needs renewing itself. Some feel that the artefacts, while being worthwhile in themselves – with a story to tell – lack a sense of cohesion. Some respondents felt that it is time for a sensitive rationalisation of the artefacts – while still retaining them as part of our history but not necessarily in their present position.

The positioning of the Stations of the Cross are seen as not being given prominence with poor lighting and not using much available space creatively. A suggestion of a re-issuing of the booklet explaining original meaning of artefacts /windows . Need to ensure Fr John's knowledge on these matters are recorded for the future. Explanation of their origins needs to be chronicled for visitors and newer members.

Flower displays are given much credit for enhancing the church interior.

LIGHTING

Central lighting in the church comes in for a lot of criticism particularly from the perspective of those who struggle to read some texts easily because of the dim lights.

Some find the back of the church (on entering and leaving) difficult to cope with. Comments on the lighting being dirty! [Lighting in the lounge](#) was felt to be too harsh and inflexible. Note: Since the review the lighting in the lounge has been supplemented with a set of further lights which are dimmable. Thus giving a softer option for lighting. .

Issues for development:

- *Investigate possibility of improvements to lighting within the church (worship space)*
- *Examine further suggestions from the community about display of artefacts – according to good practice guidelines*

ACCESS

This section was interpreted in two ways:

1. There is concern that access is restricted for wheelchair users - except for services. Wheelchair access is good for downstairs but impossible for upstairs. What can we do about this?
2. Access to the church and its services was considered diminished because of the reduced hours of it being open to the public. There was also a desire to see access to the activities / events through production of a users' handbook. This was suggested earlier under being welcoming community.

FURNISHINGS

There are many interesting suggestions for aspects of the furnishings. The position / height of the Lectern is commented. That it should be raised and returned to its original position. A request for the option of a few kneelers for worshippers who felt the importance of kneeling at times during Mass was made. Some comments about the clutter / untidiness of too many tables (and subsequent papers) at the back of church – a request for some rationalisation.

OTHER ISSUES

LAITY - CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH LEADERSHIP

- There needs to be more structure where Eucharistic Ministers, parishioners etc can feed back to the PP when he has two parishes but if he would only spend time within the GS community he would realise that there would be a great deal more support forthcoming. Would PP consider allocating one / two days per week based at GS where church could be open, he would be accessible, and he could visit elderly, sick etc.
- We (the Laity) need to be listened to. We are thinking, spiritually alive church.
- More use of lay talent should be employed. Our priests are a valuable resource and should not have to spend unnecessary time on administrative tasks that the laity could do.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

We have a large south facing roof ideal for solar panels. This could feed into the grid when church is not in use. It could save money long term.

ADMINISTRATION

We could employ a part-time parish assistant rather than rely solely on volunteers which can constrain what we can offer.

Issues for possible development:

- *Further energy conservation measures – possible solar panels*
- *Admin support – part time (paid) should be examined*