

## **Response Summary: Christ the King Church, Parish of Amesbury**

The parish phase of the Synod is now complete. We want to thank all who participated in the process and gave such open and honest views whether in the questionnaire, at the listening meetings, or both. 237 of you completed the questionnaire and 65 participated in the listening meetings. The responses clearly came from a deep love of God and the Church and the views were considered and honest. The warmth and affection of you all towards the Church was apparent and particularly for our parish team.

**What did you all say?** The consistency of responses received and heard was encouraging and from early on themes emerged. There was a clear call for change in organisation, behaviours and attitudes at all levels of the Church. The content in the survey responses was thoughtful, prayerful and rich in detail and suggestions.

Ten themes were identified. It is impossible to precisely recapitulate them here however six are noted below:

**Role of women in the church** Men and women called for women priests or deacons, citing successes in the Church of England. A clear majority said that women should be able to take on more lay roles in the Church. There were many references to lack of appreciation of the importance of women to the Church.

**Exclusion of minorities** Many respondents commented that given we are taught to love and treat everyone with compassion, it was strange that the Catholic Church did not follow this teaching for LGBTQ+, those with physical or mental health issues or the divorced.

**Engaging with younger Catholics** There was a call to enable participation in church life of younger people, closing the gap between confirmation and the 'next' sacrament of marriage but with a caution to find out what was wanted, not assuming that we know best!

**Governance and decision making** There is little or no understanding Church and parish governance, decision making, finances, and management. At a parish level, many referred to the lack of transparency about where decisions are taken and by whom. Concern was expressed that where committees existed, the recruitment process was opaque.

**Size of the parish and being part of a parish community** The size of our large parish is seen as both a strength and a weakness. There was sadness at a lack of welcome for newcomers. There were many practical suggestions on how to improve communication, to instil a sense of welcome and promote a sense of parish cohesion. A perception of lack of joy in the mass was a common theme of the listening events.

**Sunday only church?** There was a clear call for Christ the King to open its doors, welcoming the wider community, with examples of other churches at the heart of their

communities, serving coffee, hosting art events, holding concerts, in use every day of the week.

### **What's next?**

This was a balanced expression of faith in the possibility of improvement and the hope for a Church that listens and changes for the better. Although our influence at a diocese level and above is limited, our own parish pastoral team has been supportive of the process from the start and there are plenty of areas that we as a parish can work on ourselves. Exactly what the next steps are for us at Christ the King have not been determined yet. Our intention is to sit down with the team in the coming weeks and discuss our report in detail with them. Once this has taken place our full report will be published for you to read and digest. After that, we expect there to be a further call for you to volunteer/participate/contribute to a 'next steps' phase. A sustained effort from everyone is required to address issues raised and effect the changes so desired. Thank you again to all who responded, we hope you found it as enriching as we did and will remain engaged in the next phase.

Fr Saji Mathew