

St Mary's and St Paul's Wellspring Conversation

26 March 2024

How do you feel about Wellspring?

- Urgently required, good that it is about renewal.
- Desperately needed when we hear of attendance figures, why are they going down?
- An exciting development and Wellspring leaflet is very inspiring. There are practical things we can do under each of the 5 categories.
- It is about taking us back to the early days of the church, there are not enough priests, get more people involved.
- Good that the community is being engaged.
- Provides thought for people to get involved in the church.
- Gives the community a chance to have their say.
- Generational problem, not only young people but also provide for older people.
- It is a different world from Renew 30 years ago.
- We are a town centre parish as opposed to a community parish and there's a different demographic.
- Parish priest is keeper of the keys, the people are the heart and soul of the parish.
- Big gap from kids coming with parents to very few teenagers and those in early 20s.
- Compared our parish structures to those in India where there are community meetings and families get together for bible readings and to discuss social issues. We have lost the use of social gatherings as an inspiration for spiritual development, we need more social contact and Wellspring could be a springboard for this.
- Disappointed nothing solid has come from previous Synodal meetings as some of the same things were discussed then. Social life and community missing from statements.
- Hopeful about Wellspring and we have a role to develop and share our response.

What is working now?

- Integration with St Paul's parishioners, good to get to know new people with fresh ideas. How can they become more involved?
- Children's Liturgy.
- Music during the Liturgy. Masses vary in terms of people singing.
- Coffee mornings (after both Sunday masses).
- Good to have St Patrick's night celebration.
- Monday night Novena - Fr O'Brien very good at explaining and building upon scripture readings.
- Good links with primary schools and good to see the continuing relationship with St Paul's school after the church closure.
- Church hall is a great facility and could be used more for the younger parishioners.
- Walking group very successful and open to all regardless of ability.

What or how can we improve?

- Renew was successful in getting people to meet outside the church - in houses etc - in line with the approach of Pope Francis.
- Communication....Website could be better and updated to be more interactive.
- Recording of Mass online.
- We need to be ready for rapid changes in technology/artificial intelligence.
- Ask Caritas students what they would like.
- More community clubs, better use of the hall for the community and potential for the hall to be used by external agencies.
- More social evenings...share talents.
- Confession: collective Reconciliation services very popular.
- Hymns.
- Mass needs to cater for all.

- Adult formation, learned faith from our parents, perhaps have an opportunity to develop our faith.
- Benediction service.
- Invite a Mission Priest to the parish.
- More use of lay people e.g. Communion service during the week.
- Suggestion box not always available at the back of the church.
- Introduce a card payment system in church to collect donations.
- Do the elderly receive Communion if they cannot attend Mass?
- We can be more supportive of Fr O'Brien.

How can we collectively do more?

- Foster and expand contact with primary schools, have lay people involved in running groups in the schools to encourage young people to get involved in church life.
- Can we get more groups associated with the church, Scouts, Guides, sports teams?
- Be more direct in asking parishioners to actively participate in groups. Examples given of people taking part in Offertory because of being asked.
- Social events.
- 200 Club
- Younger people involved with St Vincent De Paul, possibility they would be engaged with actively dealing with poverty.
- Mass online, possibly a way to have lapsed members think about the Eucharist and maybe a stepping stone to physically attending Mass?
- Ask younger lapsed Catholics why they have stopped going to Mass.
- Collaborate with other parishes to hold Masses for different groups e.g. neurodiverse and Masses with a stronger element of music.
- Music group.
- Get children and young people to be more vocal about our Catholic charities: SCIAF, Mary's Meals, Let the Children Live etc. These charities set a phenomenal example to get our community spread the message that we are a caring and loving group of people.
- Lots to be proud of, let's get our younger people engaged with that message.

Where do we want our parish to be in 10 years?

- Our church open, thriving, packed, catering for all age groups.
- We will move with the times and be part of a supportive, helpful parish.
- Layity will be more involved and supportive of the parish priest and take more responsibility for the running of the parish.
- Women priests, married priests to encourage more clergy.
- Church being at the heart of the community again and parish priests less isolated...communal living and working together in the community, this being linked to the shortage of priests and parishes being combined so less buildings.
- Be connected to other churches in the diocese and be more outward looking in the community rather than inward looking.
- The Church will be at the heart of the community again.
