



ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

SYNOD 2021-23

PARISH REPORT

The Parish of Saint Helen's Town/City Barry

To be submitted no later than **Monday 21st March 2022**

Introduction

Parishes are invited to submit a Report based on discussions. The maximum size for the Report is 10 pages. You may be able to record your views in much less space.

Please use the structure suggested within this Template so that the Diocesan Synod Team [DST] are best-able to synthesise Reports from across the Archdiocese.

This Report will contribute to the Diocesan Report that + George Stack will submit on behalf of the Archdiocese.

Introduction: In this part of the Report, you might wish to record some of the special characteristics of your parish – urban or rural, special features [hospital/ school /prison /care homes in your parish boundaries]. Some reflection on the demographics of your parish. You might want to include details of any special ministry /service/project.

Methodology: In this section give a brief overview of the different ways in which you have engaged with parish members and those beyond the worshipping community. It might be useful to present this as a Timeline with a short comment for each month between the Training of Parish Representatives to the finalising of the Parish Report. Some reflection on the numbers of people attending / contributing to discussion would be helpful. Comments on special circumstances [e.g., telephone conversations with the housebound/ meetings with distinct groups / outreach activity] would be valuable.

Key Issues Raised: This will be the main part of your Report. You will be presenting a summary of the issues raised and the points made in your discussions/ interviews / submissions. We will be reporting across the three headings of Communion, Participation and Mission and suggest you might do likewise. Some issues may be recorded under more than one heading. There may be material to record that does not fit into these categories and space is provided for that. You may choose to summarise these in bullet points or in a few paragraphs. It is important that your summary reflects not only the responses of the majority but also some minority views.

Example: “Most respondents were of the opinion that XYZ. A minority, however, felt that ABC was more important “

Sign Off: The Report needs to be signed by the Parish Priest and the lead Parish Representative. Any Report submitted should have been made available to the community parish as a draft and should be formally considered by the Parish Advisory Council prior to submission.

Introduction – Special Characteristics of the Parish

Saint Helen's Church was built in 1906/7 and opened in 1907. The opening ceremony, presided by Bishop Hedley, took place on 28th April 1907. It is a very urban based Parish with a wide ranging of socio economic profile.

Currently, the parish covers the main areas of Barry, Sully Rhoose and Llancarfen, it covers a population of not far short of seventy thousand. The Church is fortunate in that it has (1) Saint Helen's Primary School, (2) Saint Richard Gwyn Comprehensive.

The Parish has a mixed population which is inclusive of minorities and is composed of people from the Philippines, Poland, and Asia. The Asian community are particularly active in devotional services such as the Rosary and Stations of the Cross, and have a monthly Mass in Malayalam. They form a substantial number in the congregation.

Methodology

<p>The period up to Christmas 23/11/2021 29/11/2021</p> <p>16/12/2021 3.00 pm and 6.30pm</p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Synod Training Group organisation meeting</p> <p>Preliminary meetings for Parish members</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <p>Based on the zoom meeting We decided how to proceed</p> <p>Very poorly attended.</p>
<p><u>Jan 2022</u></p> <p>11/01/2022</p> <p>25/01/2022</p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Group meeting to consider meeting the timetable</p> <p>Meeting with Catechists group</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <p>Updating the action plan</p> <p>Three of the ten questions were posed to them</p>
<p><u>Feb 2022</u></p> <p>03/02/2022</p> <p>15/03/2022</p> <p>27/02/2022 Held after the 10.30 Mass</p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>We met with Michelle Clawson Head Teacher at Saint Helen's Junior School.</p> <p>We met the Parish Council including Father Pat O'Gorman.</p> <p>The all Parish Meeting Four groups set up to discuss a selection of the ten questions</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <p>1. Michelle to talk to parents. 2. Schools to present a report of their own? Three of the ten questions posed to them.</p> <p>Some fifty plus Parishioners turned up. Group results to be noted to be included amongst other returns in the final Report</p>
<p><u>March 2022</u></p> <p>14/03/2022</p> <p>15/03/2022</p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Assimilation of returns from Parish members into a final report</p> <p>First draft of final report drawn up</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <p>Two and a half hours work.</p> <p>Sent to members</p>

Communion- How does our Church function in our local area?

Under the heading of “**communion**” we began our discussions with the following questions:

1. When we say “the Church” who is part of it?
2. How and when do we manage to say that is important to us and what part does the media play in this?
3. What relations so we have with other churches in Barry?
4. How do we promote active participation in the liturgy?

The Church has been active in Barry for many years contributing to food banks, the Easter walk of witness and ecumenical nativity plays by way of example.

The parish thought that we should continue with the SVP undertaken at St Helens as other churches were active in areas such as food banks for example. Sharing this across the faith community has obvious benefits. Although this could be improved.

The Stewards who worked during the pandemic could now remain as “welcomers” and this was particularly important for newcomers. There was varying in opinion as to whether the Catholic Church was welcoming but on balance people thought St Helens was, but again we could do better. This was discussed in breakout groups and the participants did not all know each other by way of example.

Lay people are involved in SVP, Funeral Ministers etc., this may not be widely known and should be known, in some circumstances with in the Barry community as well are our church due to our ability so help.

The Parish did encourage its members to take part in ecumenical activities like the walk of witness. But it was felt that more could be done with children’s and senior’s groups.

It might be helpful to encourage other churches in the local community to share ideas via Social Media.

Reaching the housebound was easier before Covid 19 so the parish needs to reconsider this now.

Participation – How do we work with others in supporting our local area?

Under the heading of “**participation**” we began our discussions with the following questions:

1. How do we promote the active participation in the liturgy?
2. How are the roles of the laity established in our church and could the laity do more?
3. How are differences of vision, conflicts and difficulties addressed within the Church?
4. Are our decisions based on consensus which flows from the Holy Spirit?
5. How do we best prepare people to take on roles and responsibilities within the parish?

Decisions should come from the Holy Spirit.

The majority of the respondents felt that the laity needed a mandate in order to support the clergy, for example, a church could be working well with their current Priest however if a new Priest was appointed then he could completely change everything. This was also mentioned in terms of a Parish Council, who are an advisory body supporting the incumbent priest, but would be stood down if he were to leave for any reason. It was felt that this practice should be reconsidered.

Many parishioners support the parish but it was felt that more visibility of this would be useful. Approaching parishioners personally as opposed to from the lectern was felt to be more beneficial in terms of achieving greater engagement.

It was also felt that those prepared parishioners for the sacraments needed more training and that this should be considered at a diocese or even UK wide level.

It was also widely felt that older adults should be encouraged to become Altar servers to help the younger altar servers and help with their understanding of Church teaching.

Some felt that they would benefit from continued learning, outside the necessary sacramental participation, in St Helens we have been proactive in this with several programmes but more can always be done. This is required for people of all ages.

Now that the pandemic appears to be abating then there should be a return towards groups and the parish would like to add a “men’s group” to its current programmes. Also one off social activities would be welcomed.

Greater engagement with Social Media was felt needed by some of the younger members of the Parish. It is understood that this is achieved in other parishes. This would facilitate sharing of young faith and demonstrate awareness of the issues that Social Media could have in our young people’s faith.

There was a minority view who felt the Mass should be more solemn and that that music limited as the church is a place for sacred quiet time.

Mission: How do we take the Gospel message out from our parish community?

Under the heading of “**mission**” we began our discussions with the following questions:

1. How are the voices of the minorities, the discarded and the excluded listened to in our Church?
 2. How does the parish support its members committed to the service of society?
 3. How are the roles of the Laity established in our Church and could laity do more?
 4. How do we best prepare people to take on roles and responsibilities within the parish?
- (NB: some questions appear in more than one section if appropriate)

We discussed what we meant by “the Church”. It was broadly agreed that the church was for all baptised Catholics and it was these people who we should be reaching out to. Evangelise our own parishioners before we go out to evangelise others.

When we discussed the voices of minorities and the discarded we thought about this in terms of divorced Catholics, the LGBT community, and those who choose to co-habit rather than marry.

It was felt very strongly that “Our Mission” should start with our Parish, we want to include everybody and know everyone. We as a parish have tried to evangelise but it was very difficult. It was felt that the teaching of the church on divorce, LGBT, co-habitation could contribute towards this, particularly as it was felt that the rules were not always applied consistently. The position on lapsed Catholics too needs to be understood, why are so many people leaving the church, it was felt that Catholic teach contributed to this particularly regarding the above points.

Some traditions need to be understood within the church too, post Covid some of these issues should be addressed, for example receiving both the body and blood of Christ, making the sign of peace, and taking communion via the mouth.

As a church we needed to support our members as best we can and this includes being there to help the less fortunate. We have the SVP to reach out but we need this to be a large part of our mission.

The press and social media has its part to play too, we have to recognise that this plays an important role in today’s society. More positive media would be helpful this should be done across all areas, local regional global.

Faith needs to be visible in our church, school and community so that it is seen as a large part of our lives. We need to find ways to share our faith.

We walk and pray together in order to journey in faith-fellowship.

**Any other matters that do not fit under the three thematic headings of
Communion, Participation & Mission**

How do we address the lack of priests?

The Church needs to express clearly for the Parish its position on the Ordinariate, married priests, women priests. This came up very strongly within discussions and usually in a positive manner, however a minority felt that women priests had not helped in the angelical faith.

Social media can be positive not just Facebook, apps etc. There was a minority view that whilst at a local level it is a very good church the hierarchy are untouchable to the majority.

Sign Off

This Report is submitted to the Diocesan Synodal Team on behalf of the Parish community of: Saint Helen's Barry, Vale of Glamorgan

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It is an honest reflection of the work undertaken over the last six months and has been endorsed by the Parish Advisory Council

Signed..... Parish Priest

Signed Parish Representative

Once complete please forward to:

madeleine.walters@rcadc.org

The Diocesan Synodal Team wishes to convey its appreciation for all the work undertaken in the preparation of this Report