**Catholic parish of Walsingham**

**Parish Advisory Group**

**Note of meeting 28.10.21**

Present: Fr Keith Tulloch, Fr Tom Goonan, Dilys Wadman (Treasurer, Walsingham, Wells and Blakeney), Terry Austin (Treasurer, Burnham Market), Pamela Tester (Wells), Catherine Blyth (Blakeney), Sr Pauline (Walsingham), Julia Walton and Alison Wakes-Miller (Burnham Market). Apologies: Patsy Groom (Wells), Sr Marina (Walsingham), Anne Crossley (Blakeney)

All were welcomed, especially Sr Pauline at her first meeting of the group. It was good to be able to reconvene at last. The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss the Synodality consultation.

1. **Synodality consultation: discussion**

Members had received two papers, the ‘Vade Mecum’ published by the Vatican, and Fr Keith’s summary of this document’s questions for discussion. This is included in these notes in italics.

*A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together:”*

*How is this “journeying together” happening today in your particular Church?*

*What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?*

Fr Keith explained that the consultation had been requested by Pope Francis. It was about listening to one another at all levels, and listening to ‘the world’. The Church has become over-institutionalised, and Pope Francis has asked us to look at how far we are ‘journeying together’ and what steps can be taken to move forward in this.

The group then considered each of the questions on Fr Keith’s paper. The following points were made.

*1. The journeying companions*

*In your local Church, who are the ones “journeying together”?*

*When we say: “our Church,” who is part of it?*

*What persons or groups are left on the margins, expressly or in fact?*

* What does ‘journeying together’ mean? The language used is often woolly and unhelpful.
* This applies to Church language in general; it has little connection with everyday language.
* Is this process the way in which Pope Francis is hoping that a fuller understanding of the principles of Vatican 2 will be achieved? It would be helpful if this were explicit.
* What does unify our parish? It has a wide range of people and views.
* Here everyone is invited to participate, and respond according to the way they want to.
* Do they feel welcomed? What can they contribute? Do they feel they can influence anything?
* Do people put themselves on the margins?
* Women are excluded from influence in the Church.

*2. Listening*

*How are the Laity, especially young people and women, listened to?*

*What space is there for the voice of minorities, the discarded, and the excluded?*

*How do we listen to the social and cultural context in which we live?*

* Fr Keith initiated the PAG, against considerable opposition, to try to develop a culture of listening in this parish.
* Meetings of parishioners are usually poorly attended.
* Reasons for this – avoidance of being asked to do things; assumption there’s no point because they can’t influence anything; haven’t been made welcome.

*3. Speaking out*

*How do we promote a free and authentic style of communication within the community and its organizations?*

*How do we promote a free and authentic style of communication in relation to the society of which we are a part?*

*When and how do we manage to say what is important to us?*

*Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?*

* How do we encourage people to speak?
* The Church, in general, doesn’t encourage people to speak.
* This process is potentially a huge step forward.
* Part of ‘Catholic culture’ is to accept ‘what Father says’. Still the case in many places.
* Important to be authentic, to mean what you say. Sometimes this may need to be ‘translated’ for particular circumstances.

*4 Celebrating*

*How do prayer and liturgical celebration inspire and direct our “journeying together”?*

*How do we promote the active participation of all the Faithful in the liturgy?*

* Many liturgical celebrations – eg baptism – have become minimalised.
* Baptism within/outside Mass – arguments on both sides.
* Diaconate introduced as vocation to service beyond liturgical celebrations, but is often seen as merely a liturgical role.

*5. Co-responsible in the mission*

*How is each Baptized person called to take part in the mission?*

*How does the community support its members committed to service?*

* There can be simple ways – inviting a friend to a celebration.
* Parents participate through the bringing-up of their children.
* Sometimes cliques within a church can prevent people responding.
* ‘No-one else will do it’, but people can become possessive of their roles.
* How are people helped to integrate their Christian commitment within their lives as a whole?

*6. Dialogue in church and society*

*What are the places and modes of dialogue and conflict within our particular Church?*

*What experiences of dialogue and shared commitment do we have with*

*other religions and with non-believers and with wider society?*

* Concern about management of this consultation by the Diocese. Appointment of Diocesan contact team – no consultation, nothing known about them.
* Questions provided by Diocese are bland – reduce the challenge of the Vatican questions.
* The timescale for response to the Diocese by 22nd January from parishes is unrealistic.
* Diocese imposes things – eg ‘Alive in Faith’.
* Some of this depends on how a bishop wants to operate.
* Church is not a democracy; the bishops are guardians of the Faith. But if majority of Church is passive, something is wrong.
* Geographical area of Diocese is a challenge. Norwich is quite a distance.
* Major issue is the position of women. Change in society’s understanding of role of women has not been reflected in the Church.

*7. Dialogue with the other Christian denominations*

*What relations do we have with the brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations?*

* Some very positive collaboration in the different areas of our parish.

*8. Authority and participation*

*How is authority exercis within our particular Church?*

*Is there teamwork and co-responsibility?*

* There are structures in the Diocese – eg Commissions – but the system doesn’t work.
* Little participation or achievement; little effective communication.

*9. Discerning and deciding*

*Do we discern together and make decisions?*

*How can we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchically structured communities?*

* A key issue here is the training of clergy, especially initial formation in the seminaries.

*10. Forming ourselves in synodality*

*How will we form people, especially those who hold roles of responsibility within the Christian community, to make them more capable of “journeying together,” listening to one another and engaging in dialogue? What formation do we offer for discernment and the exercise of authority?*

* Fr Keith has been trying to do this, through the development of the Parish Advisory Group and other meetings of parishioners.

1. **Synodality consultation: next steps**

The timescale is very tight. Responses have to be in to the Diocese by 22nd January; Fr Keith is away from 9th – 21st, so our parish response must be ready by 8th January. We can continue our parish discussions after that and send further material to the Bishops’ Conference or directly to Rome.

Several steps were agreed:

Each member of the PAG will talk to at least one other person about the consultation.

Tuesday 16th November Meeting of PAG in Wells after 9.30 Mass, to review written information/questions.

Weekend of 20th/21st November Material to be distributed at Masses.

Weekend Masses of November 27th/28th Questions to be answered in writing by the congregations at the time of the homily. Discussions during tea/coffee after Masses for those who would like to stay.

Opportunity offered for responses by email to [annunciation22@gmail.com](mailto:annunciation22@gmail.com) with Synodality as the subject line.

Dilys offered to collate responses and Julia offered to help with this.

Thursday 9th December PAG meeting after 9.30 Mass in Wells to look at initial draft response.

Tuesday 4th January PAG meeting after 9.30 Mass in Wells to finalise response to Diocese.

1. **Finance and fundraising**

Parish finances are depleted due to the Covid lockdowns. There is a need to begin fundraising again, to ensure repayment of the Diocesan loan. Wells have already planned a coffee morning after Mass on Thursday 18 November.

1. **Membership**

Some members of the group have completed their term of membership. Fr Keith emphasised that he did not want anyone to feel obliged to stay on, and if anyone wanted to leave they should let him know. He will be asking people to fill existing vacancies.

The meeting closed with prayer.

Date of next meetings – see above - all in Parish Room after 9.30 Mass in Wells.

Tuesday 16th November

Thursday 9th December

Tuesday 4th January