

Pastoral Strategy Consultation Summary of Responses

WORSHIP

GOING WELL	AREAS FOR GROWTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and timing of masses in the parish • OBLI central to the parish (needs grant funding) • Good homilies • Shared activities across the churches in the parish ***** • On-line Masses are valued • Mass attendance is increasing • Deacons are well used ** • Music liturgy is good • Growth in ethnic group families increasing • Regular Holy Hours & Prayer meetings. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spiralling costs for all churches- implications for church closure(s). Profit from sale(s): stay in parish or go to diocese? • church closure- access implications for travel to remaining church(es) esp. for an elderly demographic • music and live streaming (SB) • involve children in mass liturgy • strengthen links with schools to encourage young people ** • has streaming replaced mass attendance? • 'Church hub' idea with mid-week worship opportunities and satellite church(es)- proposal: 2 church closures, buy minibus with proceeds to support elderly getting to mass • More home Masses • More lay involvement in liturgy ** • SJB building used more flexibly • More use of social media to promote the Faith and church involvement *** • If a church closes we must consider how we help older parishioners travel to another church • Establish Rosary/prayer groups with socials. • Lay led Holy Hours.- Taizé etc. • Vocation Prayers before/after Mass

TEACH

GOING WELL	AREAS FOR GROWTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCIA and Sacraments of initiation catechesis across the parish ***** • Local Catholic schools & school Masses **** • bible study courses (LW) * • Children's liturgy • Good teams of Catechist's for Baptism, confirmation and RCIA. • Greater Priest presence in Schools • Greater Lay presence in schools for faith sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare more lay leaders to offer services of word & communion and funerals ** • We need succession planning for Lay leadership *** • Catechist training ** • reaching out to engage young people and their families via school links to encourage greater participation in the parish ***** • parish and diocese can make much better use of social media to promote the faith * • secure grant funding, central purchasing • delegate responsibilities to specific sub-groups to meet parish needs ** • reach out to lapsed Catholics ** • we need a planned formation programme ** (may lead to an increase in vocations) • most families whose children are baptised never come to church- getting a school place is the prize • Improved training for Catechists & Catechist retention & recruitment. ** • Improve First Holy Communion Catechist presence. *

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Parish Pastoral council.
SERVE	
GOING WELL	AREAS FOR GROWTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sr Briega McKenna mission charitable fundraising *** Social Justice and Environmental group ** SVP *** Food Bank collections Craft Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> church buildings and facilities should be made more available to local community ***** encourage more activity/social groups * Offer help to people with mental illness especially young people Do work with other Faiths Youth clubs Support those who can no longer come to church Establish Lourdes Youth Group. Establish a Legion of Mary group.
COMMUNITY	
GOING WELL	AREAS FOR GROWTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> great sense of community in all our churches - they are welcoming and positive **** volunteers give generously of their time and energy ** Outreach to vulnerable (through eucharistic ministry to the sick) Sense of community enhanced by Mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> given the financial forecasts, 3 churches in Washington looks unsustainable- some closure(s) looks inevitable encourage parents of schoolchildren to engage with church **** communication- newsletter seems repetitious foster links between schools and parishioners *** Increase social events** Improve social facilities within church buildings *** Outreach to lapsed parishioners Remove barriers of exclusivity

Summary:

The Pastoral strategy was introduced and discussed at two meetings in St. Bede's Hall. Both meetings were well attended. Invitations to the meetings were advertised at all Masses, and via the newsletter. There was a notable absence of young people, and parishioners from the African/Indian communities. Parishioners were invited to take the questionnaires home with them and meet in small groups for the discernment. The responses indicate a deep desire from parishioners to explore Faith issues, through various programmes and Faith sharing sessions. Faith development seems to be a common request. Outreach to the wider community follows on from this particularly to the families who support our Catholic schools. Lay – leaders are a vital way forward for this development, with Diocesan training programmes necessary. Increased Lay and Clergy presence in St. Robert's Comprehensive school was highlighted in supporting young people.

The Parish of St. John 23rd is blessed with a strong, very able group of Catechists who help lead Baptismal preparation, Confirmation, and RCIA programmes. The Parish needs to strengthen and reaffirm the ministry of Catechist, particularly in supporting our schools with First Holy Communion Catechetical support. Whatever shape the Parish takes in coming years, views expressed, reaffirmed the important role of the Catechist, and future support and training of this vital ministry, as they are often the first point of contact for families encountering the Church. The link between catechetical

programmes and the Sunday Mass, was often mentioned, so the importance of family friendly liturgies and welcome, before and after Mass was also highlighted.

Mass attendance in the Parish remains steady averaging 600 people each Sunday.

The well – organised network of Extra-ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who regularly take the Sacrament to the sick and housebound in their own homes, and residential care homes is seen as a valued contribution of service for the whole parish. Recruitment of more Special Ministers and Lay leaders needs to be a priority.

The Parish's inclusion in the Benedict Partnership need's some clarification. Up until recently the parish had inclusion with Chester-le- street, and Birtley. St. Cuthbert's is now part of Durham, and St. Joseph's has indicated a preference for Gateshead partnership. Would St. John 23rd benefit from joining the Sunderland Parishes?

Finance/Stewardship. St. John 23rd Parish is blessed with a committed membership on the finance committee. Parishioners donate generously to the Parish, and Gift – Aid contributions have seen a slight increase. The Parish is currently running a 30k deficit and faces the challenge of repairs and renewals to all its four buildings. Responses received indicated a willingness for more fundraising events, application for grant- funding for grade 2 listed building at our Lady's, and seeking sponsorship for various parish events, along with cost- cutting exercises for more economic / business planning for purchases and orders. In the long tern the sustainability of four buildings within one parish remains a significant challenge – over the next ten years.

What is thriving and must be strengthened? Prayer & Faith development, and Mission outreach to the young families was our priority.

Parish of St. John 23rd, Washington and Penshaw.