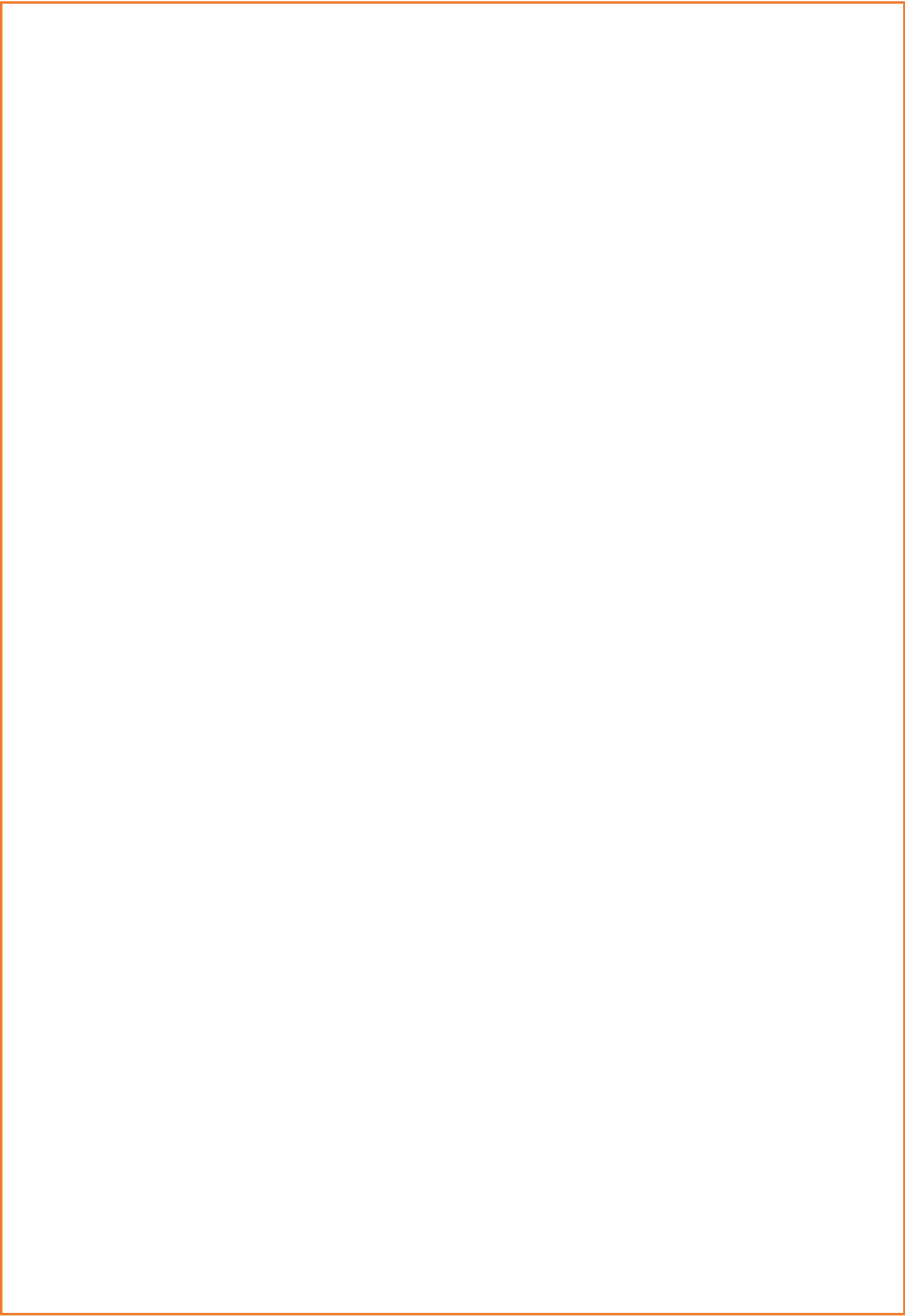




Parish Listening Sessions Synod Summary Report



This form is to be completed by the Parish Delegates, drawing on all the group listening sessions and activities that have taken place in the parish. It can be emailed to Synod@cliftondiocese.com or completed on-line at www.cliftondiocese.com/synod.

Parish Listening Session Synod Summary Report

Name of Parish and Deanery

The Immaculate Conception Parish, STROUD

Name of Parish Priest

Father Gary Brassington VF

Name of Parish Delegate filling out this form

Marilynne Morgan

Contact Details of Parish Delegate 1
Telephone number

Work: 01453 762442 Home: 07809 678582

Email Address

stroud.immaculateconception@cliftondiocese.com

Additional Parish Delegates – Name and Email Address

Please provide a brief summary of your parish's listening session for the Foundational Question:

A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together". How is this "journeying together" happening today in your parish? How is the Holy Spirit inviting your parish community to grow in "Journeying together"? Where in these experiences do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

We chose to invite parishioners along to three consecutive Sunday meetings after the Mass where we split up into smaller groups with a facilitator in each group following the guidelines on Synodal Conversations and effective Listening.

We found through this process that:

Our parish is very welcoming, warm and friendly.

There is a great network of support for one another and for the wider community.

Music within our Mass is a great joy and very much helps the prayer life of our parish.

We are a wounded parish from the effects of COVID lockdowns and a quick change of priest just prior to COVID. The community feels divided by this. Being able to access Mass on-line brought solace to many - some sharing this with neighbours who don't have access to the internet. There is concern that people will not come back to Mass, preferring to watch on-line instead.

Many of the existing groups and teams were broken up due to COVID and there is concern about re-starting these. A good thing was no-one was ever turned away from coming to Mass after lockdown was lifted. Everyone was made welcome – even people who were not Catholic came – as their churches were not open.

There are concerns over fewer priests caring for several parishes, so the priest is not always available on demand as was the case years ago. We need to be kind and caring to one another and to our priests. People were worried about the future for parishes with fewer priests. Lack of vocations for priesthood and religious life are of concern

Could/should our Deacons do more to assist Priest and Parishioners - get involved in the governance of the parish more? What about Married priests, or Deacons who are married becoming priests (some married C of E priests have been allowed to say Mass in the Catholic Church). Could women do more in the church – women deacons?

Concerns about the lack of young people in church, they come for Sacraments Baptism, FHC, Confirmation, and Marriage but are seldom seen again. We have lost connections with at least two generations regarding attending Mass it seems. There is much work to be done. Much prayer is required. We can begin by always being friendly, smiling (at the sign of peace – a smile may be the only kind thing someone else receives that week). Be thankful for what we have and strive to do better - it is not just the priest's job, we are all part of the team.

0-1500 characters

Core Question 1 – Listening

How is God speaking to us through the voices that are in our midst? How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore, including those on the peripheries? What space is there to listen to the voices on the peripheries, especially cultural groups, women, the disabled, those who experience poverty, marginalisation, or social exclusion?

God speaks through acts of kindness, being thoughtful, caring, showing tolerance and consideration to others. Through these acts of kindness, we share our belief, our faith.

We see Christ in those we meet, rich or poor, homeless, needy. As a parish we collect and distribute for Foodbank and support CAFOD and MISSIO very well. These Conversations have provided parishioners with a chance to speak and be heard. There is a general wish to continue this process of 'Conversations' for the future life of our parish which we are keen to arrange.

There is an awareness of many living within our parish that no longer practice their faith. Perhaps this could be a mission for us, to reach out to them.

The Priest is the lynch pin for communication and participation within the parish - but we should be working with him, not expecting him to do everything, especially as many priests now care for several parishes.

Newcomers to the faith do not know the names of people - perhaps we should revisit the use of name badges to help break down barriers.

COVID and the difficulties using hand outs in the early pandemic have resulted in many in the parish no longer knowing who is doing what - this can be rectified now that we are moving towards endemic rather than pandemic.

We felt that disabled parishioners are made to feel most welcome and cared for.

We are proud to be a parish with a large diversity of nationalities represented in our weekly Masses. Something we celebrate especially during Pentecost.

Core Question 2 – Speaking Out:

What enables or hinders you from speaking courageously, candidly, and responsibly in your parish and society. What space is there in your parish for the voice of people, including active and inactive members of our faith?

We plan to continue the 'conversations' started with this synod process as it is an excellent platform for people to have their say and be listened to.

Our parish has suffered problems with the quick change of priests in recent years followed quickly by COVID which has damaged our previous good systems of communication. It is hoped that this pain will heal in time.

New members to the parish/faith would like some continuation of learning on scripture, liturgy and rites of the catholic faith.

A suggestion box at the back of church may be one way for those too shy to speak out, could get their voice heard,

We have a vibrant Friendship Circle in our parish which enables catholic and other faiths to meet and they have interesting speakers giving advice about practical help and other subjects.

Core Question 3 – Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission and Sharing Authority and participation

How are the baptised members of your parish able to participate in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel? What hinders people from being active in your parish? How is authority or governance exercised in your local parish? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in your local parish?

Normally in the past the priest would ask someone to carry out a new task, this has been broken with changes in priests and COVID.

Why are people afraid to speak to, ask the priest if they could begin a group, help with a group?

Who writes the Bidding Prayers? Could a lay person do this – perhaps a reader? What do other churches do for young people to make them welcome and want to be part of their faith family?

Some felt there was no governance in the parish but is this a reflection on the effect of COVID and lockdowns

We have a Finance Committee and a Working Team who discuss and plan maintenance of Church Fabric and general running of a parish – again this is smaller than before COVID, but is functional.

Many people are keen to help with jobs within the parish but are waiting to be asked.

It is important to make everyone feel welcomed, wanted and valued through kindness, friendliness, warmth - being non-judgemental

Priests should be accountable especially with the issues of abuse within the church.

We must include schools in weekly Mass attendance, education on faith and parish life.

Core Question 4 – Discerning and Deciding

How does your parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions? How does your parish promote participation in decision making within the hierarchical Church? Does the decision making of your parish help you to listen to all members of the community, including those who are on the peripheries of parish life?

There was a general feeling of lack of consultation on this matter.

Since our quick turnover of priests – one not here for long but stopped most groups from existing, the next hindered by COVID there is not much opportunity to discuss, discern and decide in the parish. We lost our momentum, our energy and enthusiasm. The 'conversations' continuing we hope will correct this now.

Regarding young people, often their sporting engagements are on a Sunday morning (Football practice etc.) - could we have a Mass at a different time to help accommodate this. (we do have a Saturday evening Mass). Perhaps a youth Mass held regularly would encourage them.

The Conversations and Listening process for this Synod have taught us to LISTEN to one another more, and to hear issues that cause stress or pain.

The people attending the 'Conversations' are here because they want to help – which is encouraging.

If priests are allowed to stay a long time in a parish, parishioners have a chance to get on more familiar terms - this is surely better for both priest and people.

We need church governance which can support the successful running of the parish.

What happened to Diocesan Pastoral Councils and Parish Pastoral Councils?

Some people asked: Do we have an 'inner circle' of helpers and those who are not part of it feel excluded.

Parishioners need to be confident to speak to the Priest about things they would like to help with in the parish - don't expect the priest to do it all for you. Help him.

Core Question 5 – Celebration

How do prayer and liturgical celebrations, especially Sunday Mass, inspire and guide your parish? How does your prayer life and celebration of the Mass inspire and inform your personal decisions and decisions in the parish community? How does the parish invite all baptised Catholics, including our ethnic communities, youth, families and persons with disabilities and their families, into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?

Personal prayer is most important – it emanates from the Mass.
Sunday Mass does bring the faith family together – but COVID has broken this somewhat and we need to re-boot and heal as a parish family.
Newcomers to the faith asked for laminated Order of Mass sheets to be available - we have them, but due to COVID could not use them. This will be reinstated now.
We must re-establish links with other faiths within our local area.
There is still a 'brokenness' felt within the parish and it will take time, patience and enthusiasm to mend this. Prayer, both communal and individual is a powerful way to bring about healing
Encourage one another, be kind, smile, be welcoming. Show you care.
Develop more prayer time in the parish; laity could help run prayer sessions perhaps, so our priests are not overburdened.
There is a sense that we are almost starting again (post COVID) but we should see this as an opportunity to grow, as exciting, do not be downcast.
Start with personal (one to one) invitations to join us for Mass - Jesus said: "Come".

Hearing the Holy Spirit:

Don't take our priests for granted - they need our help not condemnation.
The ability to Listen to others has been great and to discern the Holy Spirit within what we hear.
Put your own house in order
Lead from the parish
There is strength in community
We all felt this Synodal Conversations exercise was well worth it and our parish will be richer for it. Thank you.