

Looking to the future for the Church in Hallam

- Mother of God and St Wilfrid, Sheffield

Following on from Bishop Ralph's Pastoral Letter which we heard on 2nd March, with the invitation to begin discussions on the future shape and size of the diocese of Hallam, the parish community of Mother of God and St Wilfrid Sheffield has come together in two sessions at the end of April 2024 to discuss the question: 'What is the Holy Spirit asking of our parish community?' We used a Spiritual Conversation Process to collect our thoughts on the four questions posed, and the results are summarised below.

Q1. What are the good signs for your parish that you can see?

- we have a friendly parish which, provides a very warm welcome
- it feels like a very good parish, socially, spiritually and pastorally
- there are lots of opportunities to get involved in parish bodies/initiatives
- there is a steady flow of new people joining the parish, and we have a diverse multi-national congregation
- the parish managed well during the Covid crisis, and numbers are recovering well post-Covid
- there are good numbers attending the three Sunday Masses
- the three Masses suit different needs
- we appreciate the daily Mass, and the Day Chapel open each day
- we are blessed with a wonderful, hard-working shepherd (PP)
- there is a strong core group of active parishioners
- we enjoy good music and hymns at Mass
- the projector is a useful support for hymn singing and appeals
- it is good to see many generations of families attending
- the re-introduction of children's liturgy is seen as a positive sign
- we value the spread of outreach activities like SVP, Furniture Store, St Wilfrid's Centre
- we benefit from a good, thriving Primary school
- the parish has healthy finances, and the buildings are in a good state of repair

Q2. What are the concerns you have for your parish?

- there is a lot of concern about what will happen when Fr K is unable to be here, in terms of the continuity of our community's practices and activities
- we have a relatively low number of teenagers actively involved, and wonder how to get more
- to a certain extent, the three different Masses produce three separate communities
- the total number of people involved in activities could be wider/greater
- some people feel that our congregation could be more diverse?
- could we integrate and involve new parishioners more quickly and fully
- would the parish be stronger if we had a parish council, would this encourage parishioners to take a greater share of responsibility for parish life
- some feel that the number of Baptisms is rather low
- there is a concern that we don't know how to encourage vocations
- some feel disappointed in the low profile of Bishop Ralph
- there is concern that our larger buildings are not energy efficient, and we should have a green energy review.

Q3. Where do you see your parish as we enter the year of Jubilee (2025)?

- we want to see the parish maintaining the good things, continuing to thrive and grow. with a larger number of active, involved parishioners
- we want to be more inclusive, with more diversity
- we want to develop more awareness of future challenges
- we would like to see more involvement of lay ministry, supporting the parish priest in delegating where possible and appropriate
- the support of a deacon in this parish would be good now, and would help in enabling continuity into the future
- some recognise that we may well have a Communion Service in place of a Mass, if a priest is not available.

Q4. What actions do you think you/your parish need to take?

- we should encourage our different cultural groups to be more involved in Mass and parish life
- we should have the whole parish welcome families with newly baptised members
- to welcome and meet the needs of all members of our community we should, for example, develop a 'teenager liturgy', or introduce more opportunities for Benediction or Adoration
- some suggested practical 'house-keeping' actions such as improving the parish website and weekly bulletin, and refreshing the porch area to make it more welcoming and showcase what we do
- it would be good to be more visible: we should showcase/display activities of our parish groups and encourage more to join; we should open the big outside doors during Mass to show we are here and welcoming
- to encourage vocations we should invite suitable speakers
- many thought we should spread better awareness of what is happening in the diocese, and must ensure support of other (smaller) parishes
- we want to face the future proactively, rather than reactively, and make good choices to manage future changes and developments in the best way
- we should undertake a 'green survey' in our parish and roll out throughout the diocese

Recognising that most of the answers to the four questions focussed on our own parish, and not on the diocese, we asked the additional question: "**What actions do you think the diocese needs to take?**" and received the following suggestions:

- every effort should be made to support the small, remote parish communities, and keep them open
- priests should be relieved of the practical burden of parish administration, building maintenance, etc, allowing them to concentrate on their core ordained activities
- the potential value of parish councils in this diocese should be recognised and publicised, and their role explained and developed
- the diocese should push to recruit more candidates to the diaconate to support our priests

- parishes with both a church and a school could consider using the school at weekends as a centre for Mass, making the church building redundant.