

Archdiocese of Liverpool Parish Development Tool



Family of Parishes	Family 2	Deanery	Sefton Inland
Parish/Church	St George's RC Church, Maghull	Date	18/10/25

This document has been produced to enable parishes to begin the process of discernment once facts and data have been gathered. It is worth reading through the document before data and information is gathered to know the way forward and the key questions to consider. The questions in green are **guidance** to help form a fuller picture. These areas are not exhaustive – you may have your own ideas. This document will allow further discernment with the whole parish in the next stage. For further information please contact: c.higgins@rcaol.org.uk

	Facts/Data <i>(if available)</i>	Issue/ Problem	Some concerns	Good
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Having given the facts/data, it leaves the columns: 'Issue/Problem', 'Some concerns', and 'Good' for comments from those filling this in but also those involved in those areas of the parish of what they see as 'issue', 'concern', 'good'.

1. Becoming a Church that accompanies people through life

Liturgy, Evangelisation and Spirituality

In the last 7 years what has happened to congregation numbers?	Numbers are recovering slightly after the decline during Covid: 2018 – 332 2019 – 381 2020 – 100 2021 – count not taken 2022 – 202 2023 – 228 2024 – 246	Greater volunteer engagement needed	- Aging population - Potential funding issue as we move forward due to falling numbers	- Volunteers that we have are very committed and, in many cases, take on more than one role. - There is a renewed spirit of reaching out, increased numbers of people joining the church and
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				development of Little Church
<i>Mass attendance figures are collected as required, more regular counts would allow us to have a more accurate understanding of attendance. The long-term reduction in Mass attendance is something that has affected all churches in the region and nationally. Low attendance is a call for evangelisation, perhaps the need for an evangelisation plan/ committee?</i> <i>The recent changes in the Mass times have made people look to other parishes for their weekly Mass, this leads to a lack of commitment to one parish, which in turn leads to a shortage of willing volunteers</i> <i>Sunday Mass is no longer seen as an 'obligation' particularly by younger generations. This again leads to a lack of commitment and a resistance to commit to a parish.</i> <i>While Covid is blamed for the decrease in Church attendance, attendance across the archdiocese declined dramatically in the six decades before Covid.</i>				
In terms of services, what does a normal week in the parish look like?	Two Masses on Sunday Weekday Mass Monday-Friday No Mass on Saturday.	• Attendance at para liturgies often poor • Is daily Mass sustainable when Parish Priests not available due to the cost of stipend for 'locum' priests?	• Daily Mass only possible as we have two priests and retired priests. Going forward is daily Mass a realistic expectation?	• Mass attendance is good. • We have a strong clergy base.
<i>Weekday Mass – Increased numbers on Wednesday and Friday. Morning Prayer attendance is declining.</i> <i>Seasonal Devotions eg Marian, Feast of Sacred Heart, Stations of the Cross poorly attended</i> <i>Services of Reconciliation in Lent and Advent 20 – 30 attendances</i> <i>Holy Days of Obligation gets an attendance of approximately 80</i> <i>It must be remembered that live streaming the services has allowed those who are housebound to join the services virtually</i> <i>It is positive to have the primary school children attend one weekday Mass each week during the seasons of Advent and Lent</i>				

Have there been any vocations (priest, deacon or religious life) from the parish in the past 7 years?	No		There is a need for a Deacon in training to support the parish going forward	
What provision is there for spiritual and theological reflection and formation?	During Lent Deacon Keith has run 'Café' Courses for parishioners. Parishioners invited to enquirers talks in Lent. Praying for Peace, now monthly exposition. Clergy all good preachers and offer daily reflections.	- No prayer groups as such. - Lack of opportunity for ongoing formation of Eucharistic Ministers and Readers - More opportunity needed to build individual spirituality	- Need for laity training to allow us to provide 'In house' training. - No liturgy group – may be needed going forward if we have no residential priest. - Greater formation for all - Ongoing formation for new members of the Church	- Clergy all strong preachers. - Seasonal Novena's prepared and taken to house bound to increase participation in Parish prayer. - Website provides a good standard of prayer resources throughout the year.
<i>There is a greater need for ongoing formation for Eucharistic Ministers and Readers. Very little provision for development after ministers are commissioned</i> <i>There is a need for greater formation of the congregation as a whole, while preaching is excellent it is only 10 minutes weekly: parish days of reflection, retreats would help develop the wider spirituality of the parish.</i> <i>Involvement of young people in the liturgy would be of benefit to the parish, perhaps the development of an 'Altar Servers team' going forward</i>				

Community Engagement

The church participates in community life outside of our own activities	Support for local charities e.g. foodbanks. Some ecumenical activities during the year.		• The current provision is fragmented and needs greater organisation to be more effective • There is a greater need to reach out to the wider community • Could be greater ecumenical efforts to help the needy		• Introduction of the Live Simply award should enable the Parish to be more outward looking • Strengthening links with both primary and secondary school should help develop outreach.
<i>Currently the parish supports two foodbanks.</i> <i>We have active CAFOD support led by a dedicated co-ordinator. The parish is starting the process of achieving the 'Live Simply' award which should raise awareness of the needs of others both locally and globally.</i> <i>We support other charities within the Parish, e.g. Christian Aid, Missio, through collections</i> <i>Links with local schools is increasing community links Maricourt provided a parishioner's event at Christmas</i>					
The church is able and willing to identify and respond to needs of people in the community	Parish meetings act as a springboard for development within the parish, issues are raised and acted on eg young families, Lourdes at home		• Parish has no SVP group to support local people • Deanery-led Caritas appears to have folded		• Live Simply award should have a positive impact and raise parishioners awareness to the needs of others. • The development of the Family Mass should increase outreach to young families

				Bereavement group offer excellent pastoral support to those in their time of need and after the bereavement with the annual Memorial Mass .
<i>Attempts by the Church to reach out to young families have proven difficult. Recently through the primary school parents were asked how the Church could help them: there was a very poor response to the letter.</i> <i>The introduction of Family Masses has gained a small but enthusiastic response from some young families.</i> <i>The Bereavement group offer excellent pastoral support to the bereaved at their time of need; this is followed up with the annual Memorial Mass in November which is always well attended.</i> <i>The Baptism group gives tremendous support to young families who are often starting on their own faith journey.</i> <i>Both the Baptism and Bereavement groups have been responsible for people joining the Church in recent years</i>				
We have an attractive and up to date website	Yes: website updated weekly with at least two new news items every week. Viewing figure have increased significantly and the website acts as a point of contact for many people.		There is a need to grow the team running the website so workloads are eased	- Numbers of monthly site sessions are just below 1000. In just over a year there has been a 400% increase in participation - The average time people stay on the website is over 4 minutes in one viewing which in industry terms is excellent.

				Website is updated every week with news stories
<i>The website has become known as the place for up-to-date information for the Parish. The news items create interest and allow Parishioners to share their stories with the rest of the Parish. The prayer resources are used throughout the year with the seasonal prayer resources being particularly popular with the Parish. The website has become a place of contact with many initial contacts being made through the contact page. However, workload is great, there needs to be more on the team: the recent addition of Michael Douglas is a bonus and as he receives more training this will ease the burden on Paul Symes.</i>				
We have attractive and up to date noticeboards	Yes, updated to and kept tidy		The positioning of the noticeboards often makes it difficult for people to read	Antonia and Cath Woods do an excellent job keeping the noticeboards in the porches and the Church up to date and looking professional.
<i>The positioning of the noticeboards is not perfect as it is awkward to look at them as people are arriving/ leaving church. However, the notice boards are categorised and always look neat and tidy (cared for) and information is kept up to date, The boards inside the Church are always liturgically in season and offer a splash of colour to the Church. Perhaps going forward there is a need for a virtual noticeboard on the website.</i>				

Other comments, explanation and identification of key issues to address. Such as:

- things that don't seem to fit neatly above but falls under this topic.
 - Hopes for the future in this area. Beginnings of a vision of the future.
- Do you have a ranking of priorities, or have you discerned one in a synodal meeting (how many people where part of meeting?):

Becoming a Church that accompanies people through life

What do we see as the potential for future development?

- A plan to attract more people to volunteer, based on personal contact.
- A Parish Open Day so people could 'Come and See'
- Using the resource of our local schools to make contact with parishioners who may not attend church.
- As many members of the worshipping community need to be involved to some extent in helping the Parish fulfil its duties
- Appropriate welcoming signage
- ALPHA Course – to engage with those who may have questions
- There is a need to capitalise on the enthusiasm that enquirers have for information
- As a Parish the manner in which we respond to people is key to making people feel welcomed and accepted

2. Becoming a Church that honours the vocation of all the baptised

Do we actively encourage our congregation into formal and informal lay ministries?	Recent attempts through website articles, bulletin requests and requests from pulpit		• Very little response to requests for help		• The parish has a strong committed ministry base on which to build.
<i>Recent weeks have seen requests at the end of Mass for support for various ministries, with limited success. A personal approach to inviting people needs to be undertaken.</i>					
Does the parish have sufficient Eucharistic ministers?	No - 14 In total			• As aging population of Parish increases there will be more demand on EM visit sick.	• EM base is good and ministers are very committed.

*It was suggested that there is a need for ongoing formation for ministers – time to reflect on their ministry and their mission in the Church. This could be done through Holy Hours, Days of Reflection, external speakers offering reflection days etc.
A few EM have been recently recruited who had been trained in St Mary's and now attend St George's.
We would like to be able to offer Holy Communion under both forms*

Does the parish have sufficient readers?	No - 13 in all		There is a need to recruit more readers.		- Good reliable base on which to build - Recently recruited a few 'younger' readers to the team.
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*It was suggested that there is a need for ongoing formation for ministers – time to reflect on their ministry and their mission in the Church. This could be done through Holy Hours, Days of Reflection, External speakers offering reflection days etc.
Fr Chris would like to have two readers at every Mass going forward. There is a need for more Ministers of the word to help ease the burden on current readers. There have been a few recent recruits, but more are needed; we now have a few younger readers which is a positive.*

Does the parish have catechists?	Yes Baptism 4 Holy Communion 3		Need for more catechists going forward	Catechists on average age range 60+	
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*A few new people have offered to help. A new Children's liturgy group currently under formation.
It was suggested that there is a need for ongoing formation for catechists – time to reflect on their ministry and their mission in the Church. This could be done through Holy Hours, Days of Reflection, External speakers offering reflection days etc.*

Does the parish encourage its people to live out their baptismal vocation through service of others?	Currently just starting 'Live Simply' award		There is a need for a SVP in the parish/ Deanery		Morning coffee and craft has been an invitation to
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			or something similar Justice and Peace group could promote social action		many to join our community
<i>The parish gives a positive example on how to live out our Baptismal Vocation through the following activities- CAFOD, Missio Red Boxes, Christian Aid support, Foodbank support, support for retired priests, reaching out to the sick through Eucharistic Ministry, prayer sheets at various times, Mass for the Sick, Bereavement Team supporting families, annual Bereavement Support Mass, Baptismal Teams supporting young families occasions, Music ministries, readers and Eucharistic ministries supporting liturgy; all those who work to make the church clean and attractive.</i>					

Other comments, explanation and identification of key issues to address. Such as:

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 - Hopes for the future in this area. Beginnings of a vision of the future.*
- Do you have a ranking of priorities, or have you discerned one in a synodal meeting (how many people where part of meeting?):*

Becoming a Church that honours the vocation of all the baptised

What do we see as the potential for future development?

- The Parish needs to develop a culture of discernment around Mission.
- For those who already minister there is a need for ongoing formation and development
- Communication systems need to be developed so that important information is getting through to the right people
- Continue to develop the good work that already exists to include the housebound.

3. Becoming a Church where synodality is embedded

Do we have an active member of the Deanery Synodal Council?	Yes Noreen Smith				Noreen is an active and approachable member of the Parish
<i>Noreen gives updates at Parish meetings of any meetings she has attended. Noreen is always available at meetings to be approached by individuals. The Parish website has also been used to update the Parish on essential documents for reading</i>					
Does the parish have a pastoral council?	No Pastoral Council as such, but monthly Parish Meetings		The Parish has no Mission Statement		Monthly Parish meetings open to the whole Parish.
<i>The Parish meets monthly, and meetings are open to the whole parish, which is a strength: what is shared is shared with the whole community. The minutes of the meeting are then shared on the parish website for all to see.</i> <i>Synodality is a process/ journey that the Parish (like the whole Church) is just embarking on.</i>					
Does the Parish have a Finance Committee?	Yes				Strong active Parish Finance Committee
<i>Members were approached to join the committee: consideration was given to the individuals skill sets, which include a range of relevant skills. The committee meet all the terms of reference set by the Archdiocese.</i> <i>Individuals' roles on the committee are set out in the terms of reference.</i> <i>A monthly finance update is given at Parish meetings, and an annual summary is published in Church and on the website.</i>					

Do we behave synodally in our parish?		• Synodality is an area for development within the Parish • There is a need to encourage more parishioners to be part of this process		
<i>There is more transparency and consultation within the parish, due to committee work and parish meetings, this is leading to a more synodal approach. The working group recognised the need to engage the wider parish community with the synodal process. 'Conversations in the Spirit' have been introduced at some parish meetings and an Advent course is planned to build on this.</i>				

Other comments, explanation and identification of key issues to address. Such as:

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- *Hopes for the future in this area. Beginnings of a vision of the future.*
- *Do you have a ranking of priorities, or have you discerned one in a synodal meeting (how many people where part of meeting?):*

Becoming a Church where synodality is embedded

What do we see as the potential for future development?

- The Parish needs to develop a Mission Statement which clarifies succinctly our Mission
- Every parish committee should have succession planning in mind and have a plan for the future
- The Parish needs to look at the best time for Parish meetings to try and increase attendance and participation of parish members.
- To develop a series of Forums/ retreats/ meetings to encourage parishioners that the mission of the Church is everyone's mission.
- We need to pray about questions about how to engage the wider community. And let the Holy Spirit direct the activities of the community.

4. Becoming a Church that renews its organisational structures and administers its property to serve its mission

Finance

We can meet all parish expenditure from our income	Unforeseen circumstances brought major expenditure in 2022. The Finance Committee which was formed then established a robust budgeting process with the operating deficit reducing each year. With the lease of the former parish centre removing its running costs from the parish budget from June 2025 and generating income from December 2026, we expect to be back into surplus in 2027.	In 2022 both the presbytery and the church were in need of major expenditure. Large sums were spent on refurbishing the presbytery after a flood and some repairs were made to the church but the biggest issue (the obsolete heating system) is still in process.	Historically, this has been a generous parish: there are substantial reserves and the level of direct giving is good. Our Finance Committee and Building Committee have the expertise and commitment to resolve the problems and restore the financial equilibrium.	We have substantial reserves which are more than sufficient to meet projected needs in the next 10 years and we expect to begin building up those reserves again with surplus budgets from 2027.
We can afford to heat and maintain our building adequately	We can afford the regular maintenance from our income but we are currently having to draw on reserves to fund additional hired heating for the church in the winter months. This is not	The church heating system is obsolete: the oil-fired boiler is still working efficiently (though well past its expected life) but the pipework and radiators are corroded and	Several surveys and quotations obtained via the diocesan buildings department have not produced an affordable and effective solution.	Our Building Committee has researched effective and sustainable solutions and is preparing a proposal for a new heating system.

	sustainable long-term and we have proposals for a new heating system.		ineffective, and there is asbestos in the underfloor section of the system.		
Our income is usually more than our expenditure	As explained above, we are making progress year by year to move from a deficit to a surplus in our operating budget.				Once income from The Venue is received parish finances will be on a much stronger base.
The amount needed for maintenance and development of our building, if we keep it, in the next 10 years is:	The Recent Quinquennial Survey has estimated costs of £186,000, including a new heating system. Our Building Committee is preparing a more detailed forecast: with the inclusion of improvements to the access and facilities the cost is likely to be around £220,000				
We have identified the resources we need to meet our likely building costs over the next 15 years	We have £340,000 in the parish account and are close to reaching a balanced budget of income and expenditure				

	without these major repairs, so our reserves are more than sufficient for the planned works.				

Building (for each building in the parish)					
Our building is in an important strategic location	The building is two minutes' walk from Maghull Rail Interchange. From this point you can get a train to Old Roan and a bus across Maghull and Lydiate				Current parishioners currently use the public transport system to get to Church
Our building is warm and attractive	The heating system needs to be replaced and currently the building committee are looking into a replacement system		Current heating system needs to be replaced		- The Church is a very attractive Church with beautiful modern stained glass, which enhances worship and creates and prayerful atmosphere - It is kept clean and tidy by a small but dedicated group of volunteers.

We have carried out all urgent work identified in the last quinquennial report	A lot of the work highlighted in the quinquennial report happens as a matter of course, annually or biannually as it is needed. The Church is in a good state of repair				
Our building has good facilities, and the cost of upkeep is sustainable for the future	We have good facilities in the Church and they are appropriate for worship. The Finance and Buildings committees are working to ensure that it is sustainable from a cost perspective moving forward.		Some developments are needed, better toilet facilities, baby change,		
Our building is accessible	Yes, but it's not ideal			We do have disabled access to the Church which is used weekly by Parishioners. However, this is a point of development for the Parish so one of the main	

				entrances could be used for disabled parishioners	
We have suitable space for various activities and events	Yes			We have a small meeting room behind the main altar which is effectively used for meetings. There could be scope to develop one of the transepts in the Church to allow for a bigger space which could be used for events	
Our building is Listed	No				

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Becoming a Church that renews its organisational structures and administers its property to serve its mission

What do we see as the potential for future development?

- Financially as a parish we are reasonably secure with good reserves, however, going forward with if we have significant falling numbers our income will decline. A priority must be to continue the work of the finance committee monitoring budgets and making the necessary changes to keep budgets healthy
- A new heating system is a priority for the Parish
- Restructuring of the church is needed to allow space for Parish activities.
- Increased disabled access is desperately needed as are a more easily accessible toilet and baby change facilities
- Upgrading of various parts of the Church, PA System, Sacristies, is desirable

5. Becoming a Church where young people and young adults flourish

We have more teenagers coming to church than 7 years ago!	• Similar numbers of teenagers coming to Church as 7 years ago	• Few teenagers on a regular basis attend Church		• Recently we have seen an uptake in teenagers being involved in ministries. • With new property development there has been a small increase in teenagers attending
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We now have two teenagers involved in Ministry of the Word.

Teenagers have been raised in a period of societal change, sports clubs on a Sunday morning, shops open on a Sunday all provide distractions away from attending Church. Church is no longer part of the Sunday morning routine for families. There are fewer children from the primary school going to the Catholic secondary school (6 last year) this means no input from the RE or Chaplaincy at Maricourt for the majority from yr 6 at St Georges

We have more children coming to church than 7 years ago!	Overall similar numbers but increased numbers when Sacramental Programmes are active.		There is an apathy from parents in relation to Church		- Sacramental programmes have increased participation. - Introduction of 'Family Mass / Little Church will enable whole family to participate in the Mass
<i>Approximate attendance of children at both Masses is 12.</i> <i>There are too many distractions away from Church e.g. sports practice. The families that do attend won't necessarily attend every week and consequently will not commit to take up a role in the function of the church.</i> <i>Recent changes and an outreach programme in the form of family Masses is showing green shoots.</i> <i>The experience from the primary school with the 'Spirit Squad' shows that there is a genuine interest in 'faith' from the children but sometimes the parents can be the barrier to the development of that interest</i>					
We have more young adults coming to church than 7 years ago!	The general consensus was that there are a few more young adults attending Mass than 7 years ago		Attempts to engage with young adults has met with little success		- There are a few young families now attending Church. - Website does publicise activities for young adults every six weeks or so, which has had some success.

The lack of data around young adults doesn't help us in seeing the big picture.

Maricourt will support the 11:30 Mass on Youth Sunday providing music, readers, offertory etc

There was an attempt to form a youth group a few years ago which had limited support and did end up in producing the website, but due to lack of support it folded.

We have an active plan to engage young people in the life of the church!	No		No formulated plan to engage with the young people of the Parish		
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Website has promoted activities for young adults taken from the Pastoral Development Bulletin – one young person attending ' Catholic Youth Conference' at Ampleforth Abbey over the summer as a result of seeing the advertisement on the website .

Schools

We have active engagement with our local primary school(s)	More engagement with the primary school in recent years thanks to the hard work of Teresa Mawtus (RE Co-ordinator).		The primary school is not on Church grounds: the distance can act as a barrier to development of weekday activities.		The positive response to Sacramental programmes has been a noticeable improvement.
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Deacon Keith offers support for Ash Wednesday services and has completed some training with staff.

The children attend weekday Masses during Advent and Lent. There is increased participation in Sunday Mass when the Sacramental programme is running. This will hopefully act as a stepping stone for the development of the Family Masses. Catechists from the parish support the Sacramental programme and hopefully the Family Masses will provide a follow on from the programme. There are four governors who are practising parishioners on the governing body. Relationships have become stronger in recent years between Parish and School.

We have active engagement with our local secondary school	• Since the appointment of Julia Ashes as Chaplain we have seen a marked increase in Parish/ School links	• Very low numbers of children from St George's primary school go on to Maricourt after year 6 • Issues around Confirmation preparation and the need for more parish involvement	• Is it realistic to expect clergy to support Masses in School, as the demands on their time increase?	• Parishioners have been invited to a Christmas Event in School. • Children have been brought to Mass for feast days. • Church is seen as 'Home Parish' by Chaplain • The school makes use of Church for Masses e.g. Year 7 Welcome Mass
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The school engages with the primary feeders. The priests of the deanery support liturgical celebrations as and when they can. There is a question as to whether this should be widened as Maricourt takes a high proportion of children from outside the deanery and priests external to the deanery could support occasionally. We need to consider that as priest numbers reduce does the school have to look at providing alternative liturgies to the Mass?

There are no real activities on Education Sunday in the Parish.

Since the appointment of Julia, the website now reports on Chaplaincy activities within the school e.g. recent report on the Maricourt Mission Week.

Students from the sixth form have presented 'Stations of the Cross' during Lent and have attended Wednesday Morning coffee and crafts.

Confirmation no longer the responsibility of Parish, however, Deacon Keith has been into school to meet with the young people preparing for the Sacrament. The diocese needs to clarify and improve the registration system and programme for the young people

The activity of the school chaplain complements the life of the parish and vice versa	• Yes, Julia is actively involved in parish life: she reads and participates in supporting other activities.	• Lack of wider parish involvement in chaplaincy activities.		• Julia is proactive within the parish and is recognised as the Chaplain at Maricourt. • Regular contributor to the website,
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There are issues around clergy availability at times. As already stated, do we need to look outside the deanery? Does the school always need a Mass? There needs to be a development of policy between clergy and the Senior Leadership of the school, so the situation is clarified and protocols are put in place.

There are a few parishioners on the governing body of the school who act as foundation governors.

Diocesan governor events are brought to the attention of governors by the clerk of governors

Other comments, explanation and identification of key issues to address. Such as:

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Becoming a Church where young people and young adults flourish

What do we see as the potential for future development?

- Need to explore other Parishes which are successful in working with young people
- Need to continue the development of relationships between the feeder schools and Maricourt
- To develop a strategy for engaging with parents in the primary school
- To examine using Youth Alpha and a possible engagement tool.
- To engage with Sarah McGeehan – Youth Engagement Officer for Diocese and ask for support/ suggestions

6. Becoming a Church that cares for its priests

Are we an actively supportive parish to the work of our priest?	• Yes		• Aging population of Parish will affect the support given moving forward.	• There is a strong support for the work of the priests in the Parish
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Strong support is evidenced by the work of the Parish Committees and the various ministries which assist the priests in all the activities. It is estimated approximately 70 people are involved in voluntary work across every aspect of Parish life, this equates to approximately 25% of the Mass going community. Examples – Sacristans, Sacramental Programmes, Bereavement group, cleaners, flower arrangers, Ministries -Eucharist, Reader , Welcome, Committees – Finance, Buildings. To name a few.

It was noted that the Parish can be supportive as the clergy allows us the freedoms, we need to support them.

The retired priests resident in St Georges Court receive a lot of practical support from Parishioners, including Shopping, Cleaning, support with transport for appointments etc

Do we respect the personal space and time of the priest?					Parishioners are respectful of the priest's need for personal space.
Do we have respectful concern for the welfare of our priest?					Parishioners are genuinely concerned about the welfare of the priests

The openness of Fr Chris leads people to help and support him, Fr Lister is supported in his ministry. The working group likened the parish to a family, supportive of each other. Again, this reaches out to the retired priests, those who play an active role in the parish and those who don't, all our supported if they need help.

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Becoming a Church that cares for its priests

What do we see as the potential for future development?

- Clergy both active and retired are very well supported
- We need to increase the numbers of people whose ministries support the priests directly: Eucharistic Ministers, readers, sacristans etc – succession planning