

Forest of Dean Roman Catholic Churches

Working together for a sustainable, hopeful future for our Church, now and for generations to come.



Our ideas and thoughts so far

be inspired!

At the start of this year we started looking at the problems facing our churches in the Forest - and, in fact, many churches of all denominations.

We have fewer and fewer candidates coming forward for the priesthood, falling numbers of parishioners and too few younger families to take over the reins, as well as churches that are in need of expensive, frequent repairs. We recognise that this situation is environmentally and financially unsustainable.

Pope Francis is actively encouraging Catholics all over the world to get involved in discussing and helping to shape decisions about our churches and our worship. The *Inspired!* team came together to enable discussions amongst our parishes.

Everybody's
opinions
count!

365+ ideas, thoughts and comments!

Note from the Chair of the Parish Pastoral Council

We are delighted that so many of you gave considerable time and thought to your responses to our first *Inspired* leaflet.

We are taking on board your comments and ideas and are using them to help us improve our communication and draw our community together.

As our places of worship are opening up following the Covid lockdowns, and we are able to meet more face to face, we hope that more service, prayer meetings, study groups and social events can be planned. We really want to continue an ongoing open dialogue with everyone in our Forest of Dean community.

It was lovely to have our summer fete in September, and nice to get out and have some social interaction after so long.

We now feel able to have our AGM and this will be on Saturday 27th November in the church hall at St Margaret Mary Church, Coleford. We will meet at 10.00am for coffee and cakes, and the meeting will start at 11am.

This is an opportunity to meet the Pastoral Council, put yourself forward if you would like to join us, vote for your representatives, ask any questions you may have and join discussions on our future. It would be wonderful to have one or two young people coming forward to improve our diversity and bring the views of the next generation too!

For those concerned, I can confirm that our financial situation is currently ok and a financial report will be given at the AGM, with details circulated prior to this.

I look forward to meetings as many parishioners as possible.

Pip Deave

Our Forest church's key themes

Themes identified by Pope Francis at the beginning of the Synod 2021-2023:

* Communion

*Participation

*Mission

Thank a volunteer!



Julia Sams was invited to read in Mass in Our Lady of Victories many years ago. She describes how this led to other roles as part of her spiritual development, including the offertory procession, and eventually becoming an Extraordinary Eucharist Minister. She was involved in the Proclaim 15 group, a national initiative in 2015 about how we can share our faith that led to changes in our parish such as allowing the churches to be open and accessible to people outside Mass times. Julia says it is a great privilege to read the word of God because it needs to be heard, and also taking communion to people unable to get to church - because Jesus comes to them.



Graham Yeates says he enjoys volunteering because he is retired and has plenty of time. As an Extraordinary Eucharistic Minister he takes communion to people who cannot get to mass. Graham is 80 this year and is a retired electrical engineer. For many years he has done electrical jobs around the churches, including going up high on an extension ladder to change the bulbs at St Joseph's, with his wife, Margaret standing on the bottom! He is in the kitchen washing up whilst Margaret waits at tables at Coleford Lunch Club, and looks forward to this starting up again soon.

Your inspirations!

"We could have lovely prayer services for special occasions, both sad ones and those for which we wish to offer thanksgiving. We need to involve creative and artistic people in these and create services which are spiritual and inspirational."

"Possibly more online services could help as we've had during lockdown, for which we have been so grateful."

"Would it be feasible to have one church building with some sort of outreach facilities - transport is always an issue. A garden would be good. This could involve the local community - growing veg for sharing- flowers for church."

"Watch over the young, be generous with your time to plant Faith and Love, and pray, for your example will nourish the future young people."

"Church obviously has a serious, reverent purpose, but all communities need lots of fun activities too so that they strengthen social bonds and nurture confidence in their unique identities."

"Through our Baptism all are called to share in the life and mission of the Church."

"My overriding concern is that this area does not 'fall through the gap' as it has in history, with no Catholic ministry or Mass available for people."

"We need to replace scattered churches with one accessible, good quality, modern church building where the maintenance would be low// easier and with energy efficient, cheaper and sustainable power systems."

"We could be a united Body of Christ, spiritually as well as in practical, community terms."

"When we are baptised we accept Christ's call to follow Him, by attending to the needs of others and to Christ, strengthened by the Holy Spirit we can all be active members of our Church."

"Unite with other Christian Churches. Pope Francis tries!"

Recommended: For a better understanding for the feeling of the Parish, please click the following link to see the full list of responses. Should you require a paper copy, please contact the parish office.

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Our church community's responses to Dialogue #1 June- October 2021

Everybody's opinions count!

EMERGING THEMES

OUR CLERGY are hard-working, approachable, considerate and kind.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

What is it? What does it do? We want it to communicate more and better.

How can it work smarter? What's our parish financial situation?

Can the PPC lead our parish in encouraging new and returning Catholics?

We need to be better organised and transparent about who we are and what we do.

OUR WORSHIP AND COMMUNITY

We like and value Mass, other services and our music. We value our church community highly and want to make our church as welcoming as possible to all, as well as making stronger connections with Christians of other denominations. We wish to create a closer church community with more social and fun opportunities for all to help bring us together.

YOUNGER FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

are welcomed and recognised as the future of our church in the Forest. We want to offer more opportunities for children, young people and their families to fully take part in all church activities. We realise that we need to look outwards and work together on encouraging new church members.

PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO HELP

and want organisation, defined tasks and guidance. New volunteers are welcomed especially as our existing 'keystone' volunteers/lay workers/Ministers already fulfil several roles each. This is an unsustainable workload as people grow older and/or become less able.

NEW MINISTRY TEAMS

are suggested, with a concerted focus on providing for specific needs and wants, for example: Training for Readers and other liturgical service; Bible discussion/study; Bereavement and funeral support; Well-being; more Faith and Lectio Divina groups; Children and young people's liturgy and activities; Community outreach; Outreach to our fellow Christians in other denominations.

ONE CHURCH

All who expressed an opinion on our Church's sustainability across the Forest recognised that, to achieve our aims of a long-term future and a closer, more functional, community-focused Church body, we need to have one Mass Centre/church building in an accessible location, with parking, well-organised transport for those without their own cars, and other support, including increased online services/talks/contact,



A big 'Thank you' to everyone who is taking part
in the Inspired! project.

We hope you'll find everyone's thoughts and ideas very interesting.
We've been fascinated by these responses and inspired by so many.

Already, we've taken action on some issues that have been raised and
will continue to work on many other ideas – with your help!

All these opinions will help shape the future of our church in the Forest.

Love from the Inspired! Team.

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You can read the full list of responses here:

You can download the *Inspired!* Dialogue #I and other *Inspired!* information leaflets
here: <http://www.forestrc.co.uk>

Watch Fr Barnabas' videos here:

<https://vimeo.com/533554621> & <https://vimeo.com/518752504>

Watch PPC Chair, Pip Deave's video here: <https://youtu.be/ye4WP0w8E>

Contact the Inspired! team at the Parish Office

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responses have been anonymised in this report. If you're a contributor to this
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