

St John's Church Carrington PCC

Meeting of 12th May 2022

Collated feedback about the Community Eucharist

Requirement: PCC decision on the future of the Community Eucharist

Background

As part of the parish plan and a desire to be accountable for the development of the parish the PCC endorsed the proposal to provide a Community Eucharist on one Sunday each month. In doing so it is hoped that St John's will find a way to connect liturgically with people in the community who find St John's difficult to access and that it will afford the opportunity to build relationships. In proposing developments for the Community Eucharist it is important to be mindful of the desire of regular worshippers to preserve our Catholic identity the meaning of which is not clear) but it can be safely assumed that it does relate to a sense of reverence and possibly order.

Group to drive the development of the Community Eucharist

The PCC asked Denis Tully to head up the project but while initially it will be shaped by people familiar with worship at St John's it is hoped that people who are not necessarily regular worshippers will get involved, including parents of children. It is recognised that this is also an opportunity to encourage other people from diverse and/or minority backgrounds to be more visible in actively being involved.

Review

The PCC agreed to review the initiative after 6 months but this was delayed as it was agreed that it would be useful to have some feedback from members of St John's. Below are the questions followed by a synopsis of the section or in the case of pure numbers the data.

- 1. The aim of the Community Eucharist is to make worship more accessible within the tradition of St John's. If we could do more around this theme please tell us what we could do to make worship more accessible or more worthwhile for you (and your family).**

Based on the responses submitted there is a divided view that on the one hand some people say they don't need a service that is more accessible and prefer a traditional approach (a more focused Anglo Catholic service with awe and wonder robes and incense) and a view that the service should not take place on a Sunday morning. On the other end of the spectrum there is an ask for services to be more informal and accessible. There are several comments that more explanation is desired about what is happening in the service and what is in the church (why two alters?). There are also views that there should be more for children. Answers also included some commentary of appreciation of the services and that being part of the Community Eucharist team has made worship more worthwhile. The process of reviewing services was picked up and it is asked whether this could be applied to other services as a way to imprint stronger experiences for people who attend them?

2. How many times have you attended the community Eucharist?

8 6 6 6 6 6 6 5 5 4 4 4 3 3 3 2 2 1 1 0

(different people may have filled in the questionnaire at different times when there were different numbers of Community Eucharist Sundays)

3. Of these, how many times have you attended in person?

8 6 6 6 5 5 4 4 4 4 4 3 3 3 2 2 1 1 0 0 0

4. How many times have you attended online?

6 4 3 2 2 2 2 2 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

5. What have you found positive about the Community Eucharist?

Two people stated that they found nothing positive about the Community Eucharist. However there are a lot of comments which could be described as drawing out the creativity that has been presented through the services; Jenga prayers, the singing, the variety of trying different songs/hymns. There is a comment about the appreciation of having the piano which is described as more intimate. One person mentioned that they “noticed that after the Community Eucharist there has been a spark in the way people have spoken about it.”

6. Is there anything you do not like about the Community Eucharist? If you do not come, could you tell us why?

For some there is a clear objection to having the Community Eucharist at all, with the severest view being that it brings ‘a lack of respect’. There are strong views that Anglo Catholic style of worship should be ‘brought back’. In contrast to the appreciation for creativity there are comments here which indicate some confusion or perhaps liturgy and form not quite hitting the mark for some people. There are also comments (in answers to various questions) about not being challenged. This presents the core issue of how a service is pitched and who it’s for.

7. What could be done to strengthen/improve the Community Eucharist?

Again there are several pitches for a return to the traditional service with the restoration of ‘children’s church’. There is a suggestion that calling it a ‘Community Eucharist’ may suggest that some people are only invited or welcomed once a month or they would not enjoy and understand services the other weeks. So they may not experience the services on the other Sundays. There is suggestion to use a wider variety of instruments. Suggestions are repeated from previous answers.

8. What is it you are looking for when you attend worship in St John’s?

The comments to this question can be broadly divided into three camps:

- ‘traditional’ Anglo Catholic worship containing form, prediction, reverence

- Traditional form but an appreciation that in addition there needs to be something different.
- Something familiar

9. If you would like for a member of the worship committee to reach out to you for further discussion and feedback, please leave your contact information below.

Not likely!

One email address provided.

Comment

It is not difficult to deduce that some people are feel discordant about the Community Eucharist. Some feedback can be interpreted as blaming the Community Eucharist (or those organising it) for more formality of worship not returning to the other services. In fact there is no crossover of influences from the Community Eucharist into other services. Why they have remained as they are, since Covid, is a matter for the PCC and Ministry Team.

The hope was that the Community Eucharist would encourage families to get involved in planning it. This has not happened although there is some development in this area now. Occasionally families have attended. The other objective of finding a way to connect liturgically with people in the community who find St John's difficult to access and it being a means of building relationships it could be argued is beginning to happen. Attendance is growing (as it is in other services). There are lots of conversations after the services and lots of mixing. One way of looking at the feedback is that some have the perspective of looking outwards and others inwards. This may indicate that we have not been successful in communicating effectively with people in St John's or maybe not enough.

From the feedback, the Community Eucharist may be presenting a challenge to the PCC, as there is some feedback saying that it creates some confusion or it's neither one thing or another. To move out of what might be a half way place, the liturgy would have to go more conservative or even less formal. In addition we need to be clear what we are trying to do (if it is to continue) and how this is done. Music is important to people and it is an area that requires constant attention. Whether it is liked or disliked it is significant to people's experience of worship.

There is clearly a division of views amongst people who attend St John's. To date communication about these matter between the various caucuses has not happened face to face. It would seem that it is essential this happens in some way to develop understanding. Without it we dis-ease will continue if the service continues.

APPENDIX - RESPONSES

The aim of the Community Eucharist is to make worship more accessible within the tradition of St John's. If we could do more around this theme please tell us what we could do to make worship more accessible or more worthwhile for you (and your family).

- I think the community eucharist has shown what is possible in our worship around creativity while keeping good structure and adhering to our catholic identity. It also prompts us to attend to our other services and review them and see how they could be refreshed so they make more of an imprint and stronger experience in the minds and hearts of people who attend them.
- I can't answer this because I have found worship accessible and profoundly worthwhile at St John's for 30 years.
- Need to build a more permanent and consistent presence for families. Making it "family friendly" once a month implies that the other weeks are not.
- ok as it is now
- As someone who is familiar with the Eucharist it's hard to say. Could think about welcome - how people are greet, put at their ease and understand why we do what we do. And informality - could the service be more participative and interactive (notwithstanding the complications of Covid)
- As I am of the older members of St Johns I am rather set in my ways I think the Community Eucharist is a splendid idea but have only attended once and was rather lost
- Our needs are met
- This service should not take place of our Sunday Morning Eucharist never attended.
- "I prefer the traditional approach - with children being involved at their own pace.
- and understanding. But having elements that would appeal to all ages is good. And giving children a role gives them validation. eg. boat boy/girl, choir members, readers. "
- There could be Alpha courses or our own that could include explanations of the elements of the service otherwise people need to immerse themselves in the service to experience it fully.
- A more focused Anglo Catholic service with awe and wonder robes and incense
- More explanations and examples of how and why we do certain things in the Anglican tradition to encourage visitors and newcomers and prevent an 'outsider' feeling.
- I would like even more basic information to be explained. For example, why are many of the words the same from week to week? Is there any scope for the priest to vary this? Why does St John's have two altars? And more ...
- Shorter services
- As a member of St John's, I do not need a more accessible service. My observations about the service for others is that we could do more specifically for children who attend, including continuing to have an area for them to sit and listen/do activities at the front of church,

directing them to this area when they arrive (briefing stewards to do this) and continuing to include activities that they can be part of (Jenga prayer, simple songs that are engaging, art and craft activities that they can show to the congregation at some point in the service etc).

- I think this is very important. St Johns has plenty of community outreach but we need to do more things like the Community Eucharist to help people learn and experience what the worship is all about. To act as a spiritual bridge between the non -churchgoing community and the community of St Johns. Actually being part of the Community Eucharist team has made worship more worthwhile for me and the experience of working together as a team has been part of it.
- I sent a review in this morning. I would like to add to it a big thank you to Denis for all the hard work he has put into this. The effort putting all the liturgy together, getting people together and inspiring us all to do it all whilst he has so many other things to juggle with his time. As someone who participated in the planning team I think the Community Eucharist has been instrumental in keeping us going - growing and developing as a Church rather than things being on hold during the interregnum.

What have you found positive about the Community Eucharist?

- I have noticed that after the Community Eucharist there has been a spark in the way people have spoken about it. It is interesting how many people have participated in the prayers. The piano is more intimate and the gentle voluntaries on the piano are often helpful in preparing for worship. The hymns are good.
- Families attending
- All worshipping together
- The willingness to try new things. Different ways of doing intercessions (if it doesn't take too long to explain what to do). Some explanation in the pew sheet of what is going on. Retention of the core bits of our traditional eucharist. Modern language for the Lord's Prayer.
- Energy and engagement with the congregation (for example, prayers involving us moving around with objects to physically place somewhere)
- "very positive "
- It's different and recognisable. Feels open and busy with the market outside
- As I have said Because of my age and Churchmanship. Having worked for the Cof E for most of my adult life I prefer my current method of worship. I do however fully support the need for the Community Eucharist. to draw younger generations into our church family
- It is a helpful service for children
- Nothing
- Jenga prayers, some of the music.
- "Maybe some sermons were more "
- The singing by members of the church standing front right, like a choir
- Nothing
- More new people have attended
- Attempts to involve participation in new ways of prayers, different musical involvement and drama, simplification of language for newcomers - continuation of some of the previous monthly family friendly services. Good for occasional monthly services.
- It is a welcome change.

- Encouragement to attend, different faces at the front, warm welcome
- "Trying different things
- Having activities (colouring etc) available for children"
- The music and singing all together - especially when we have sung in rounds; the prayer activities; the simpler words and explanations
- The way members of the congregation have participated. Les led from the front which is a good thing sometimes. The way newcomers have been drawn in. It has felt like being part of something very special.
- Good mix of themes. Explanation of service and things that happen. Involvement of children where present. Singers leading the service. More involvement of lay people.

Is there anything you do not like about the Community Eucharist? If you do not come, could you tell us why?

- No
- No but I have stayed home most weeks and followed it on YouTube because I have to catch 2 buses and slight risks due to Covid
- Singing worship songs no one knows, not even regular worshippers. It's embarrassing. Sermons that don't really challenge me. I don't always come especially if I don't care for the theology of the worship songs!
- Alan is a phenomenal resource, but sometimes the double sermons run a bit long - the puppets are sweet, but maybe not for every time?
- no very satisfactory I attend when not on duty as a Licenced Lay Minister
- Nothing to add
- I commend the current pattern of worship which suits both established Members whilst catering for families and children in a less formal way
- I would need more experience of going in order to say.
- This service means nothing to me I come to Church for a real Anglian Catholic Service which does not take place at the moment. Time we got back to normal.
- "The puppet seems a bit weird.
- It is not possible to attend. "
- No i don't like the format I prefer traditional Anglo catholic service bring back servers and incense
- There is nothing spiritual or mystical about it so an essential element is missing.
- Lack of respect for our traditions
- Some people do not like the change from the traditional service
- Not everyone wants to come to the front of the church - due to close contact anxiety (covid), drawing attention to themselves (British identity issue) or mobility matters.
- I'm not sure that running the Farmer's market on the same day works too well.
- Talks are not accessible to younger children
- Sometimes feels "in between" - not quite aimed at children and not quite at adults.
- No.
- No. I absolutely love it. I have enjoyed getting to know other members of the team better.

What could be done to strengthen/improve the Community Eucharist?

- There are people in St John's who play musical instruments. It would be great if they were more involved.
- Don't know
- I don't know. I think we have tried hard. is the "community" (who are they?) actually coming??
- Keep it up! Find ways to connect the energy of the market and community Eucharist back to other Sundays.
- Return of traditional peace
- See previous comments
- I cannot comment
- There should be solemn moments in it and an explanation as to why.
- This service should not take the place of the 10 am service.
- "Have not seen it enough to make suggestions.
- Calling it a 'Community Eucharist' may suggest that some people are only invited/welcome once a month or they would not enjoy/understand the other weeks. So they may not experience the services on the other Sundays.
- "
- See above
- I think we should have our standard service each week and restore 'kids church' plus have sessions for newcomers to answer questions and explain how our worship works.
- A proper full time Vicar
- it is so difficult to please all of the people all of the time
- Explain how we do things at this service and differences with regular services. Take opportunity to encourage wider involvement in church and activities
- Perhaps more of an explanation of what "eucharist" means.
- Younger children need activities to do with their hands throughout the service. They do enjoy colouring but this could be improved. Pencils are often not sharp.
- More singing
- Maintain and improve the music by reducing reliance on piano accompaniment - using different instruments to enhance and lead the singing (recorder, drum); getting children more involved in the music
- More "stage directions" for those who don't usually come to Church. More explanation about what we are doing and why.
- sometimes Vicars are not consistent between services. Don't like the 'organised chaos' that happens before service. Sometimes the hymns/reading are too babyish. Piano is too weak to lead the service. Don't like the idea of departing from the lectionary readings. (what's to stop us doing easter readings at Christmas?)

What is it you are looking for when you attend worship in St John's?

- Worship being a means to help me connect with Jesus and God. I want worship to be of good quality that I can be proud of so I can invite other people to it.
- Meeting with God
- Friendly greetings singing hymns prayers

- God's grace mediated through the eucharist. Challenge to my thinking. Spiritual nourishment. Space. Quiet. Prayer.
- Connection, peace, renewal
- Spiritual guidance
- Community and spiritual reflection and refreshment
- A return to some of the more Anglo Catholic traditions as well
- That the service is centred on the Eucharist in the Anglo Catholic Tradition and that it is totally predictable except for the Community Service which I expect will be varied.
- A service like we used to have.
- "Personally a strong traditional catholic 'grown up' service with thought provoking sermons.
- Not 'dumbed down' for children, who may find the 'theatre' of the service interesting enough, offering a different experience to everyday/school life.
- The Community Eucharist would not be my first choice of service if I could attend."
- Inspiration
- A traditional Anglo Catholic service and fellowship .
- A place for quiet reflection and reverence
- That most people will realise change is necessary in order to move forward
- Familiarity and consistency in the Anglican based services, but acknowledging the need to introduce ourselves and what we are to newcomers and strangers to the church.
- Satisfaction, contentment and a sense of belonging to something worthwhile.
- Participating in a worshipping community
- Surroundings encouraging thoughtfulness and prayer
- Worshipping with others as a community; Worship through music and rejoicing; Space and silence; coming together at the eucharist
- To meet Christ in others and be part of a collective communion. To be fed spiritually and to contribute by my presence. To learn. To be challenged. An expression of thanks.
- bring back the organ. Gives a better lead and can play more suitable voluntaries. Follow the lectionary readings. More quiet relaxing before service starts. Don't have too many people involved in the planning stage and stick to what has been decided. Better still, have this as a separate service (under a new vicar) rather than messing about with our normal Eucharist/Mass.

If you would like for a member of the worship committee to reach out to you for further discussion and feedback, please leave your contact information below.

- [One email address supplied]
- Not likely