Synod 2021-23:

Notes of the meetings at St. Cuthbert’s

*All meetings are for the purpose of listening and sharing. These notes are therefore bullet points reflecting views expressed during the meetings, and the views of individuals may vary. There is no expectation of decisions or actions, although there may be ideas we can consider at a later date.*

# Initial meeting (30/10/21)

**A Synodal church, in announcing the Gospel, 'journeys together'.**

**How is this “journeying together” happening today in our local Church?**

* Mass attendance has halved with COVID. Our parish has done very well in keeping up communications, but people are still very cautious about coming out, and have we noticed ***who*** has stopped coming*?*
* There has been real joy at coming back physically to church.
* Zoom calls in the parish (e.g. the Gospel Reflections) have been a great experience and have facilitated some deep conversations and getting to know people better.
* The experience of the last 18 months and our Gospel Reflections have deepened our experience of scripture and the Liturgy of the Word.
* During lockdown, the experience of some on-line Masses (inc. the Cathedral) was not good. It brought home forcibly the need to be present as a member of the congregation, and reinforced why the post-Vatican II liturgy is so important. It made us think deeply about communal worship.
* Some streamed Masses have reinforced the importance of excellent liturgy and preaching (Blackfriars, Ampleforth).
* Still felt that ‘God is with me’: the church at home.
* The pandemic has meant people think more about community.
* Painful separation from families (although Zoom has helped).
* Not being able to accompany the dying is a wound we will never get over.
* Has COVID affected us enough? If we had been a *real* community would it have been more painful?
* It’s questionable whether we are ‘journeying together’. We’re certainly journeying with fewer people. And we live in a society which suggests people journey on their own, very individual. People, young and old, are looking for very different ways of finding contentment.
* Young people are leaving the church for many reasons. Research suggests they do not find the church’s moral standards make sense. They admire the church’s work with the poor and the environment but no longer believe.
* Young people have not given up on faith – they have never known it. Secular culture has filled a gap.
* The abuse crisis has discredited the church. Why should people listen to an abusive church?
* The church’s response to the abuse crisis has been as big a scandal as the abuse.
* All of this is a call to examination of conscience. The church has been unfaithful to the covenant before. But conscience and repentance do not speak to modern culture.
* We have the Good News. It’s not our message that is wrong. We are not getting the message across.
* Vocations: The priesthood seems unattractive to young people, but God has not stopped supporting the church. Education of the clergy needs to be reviewed: they should not be sheltered from the rest of us in seminaries.
* The church has become too comfortable, staid. We try to fit things into existing structures and are no longer listening to people.
* Institutions are naturally defensive, trying to defend complex interactions involving many people. But the church is supposed to be different.