

Parish Communications survey
Report for the Sacred Heart Parish Pastoral Council
April 2022

Introduction

After discussion at the Parish Pastoral Council, it was decided to undertake a survey on parish communications among parishioners. A Google form was sent out in the body of the email with the newsletter attachment to all subscribers to the parish newsletter. 139 responses were received, the majority of these within a couple of days of the survey being sent out. The survey link was included in the newsletter for a second week and hard copies were available at the back of church to fill out and send back. 2 responses were received in hard copy.

Summary

- The newsletter remains the key communication tool for people across the parish and parishioners seem comfortable receiving this electronically.
- Parishioners are happy with the frequency of communications.
- Practical information like Mass times and parish community information was identified as the most important information to receive.
- There seemed to be a desire among respondents for further communication on parish news (including longstanding projects like the building renovation and the Heart Project), volunteering opportunities and more opportunities for dialogue.
- The majority of respondents to the survey identified as female which suggests women are more likely than men to be engaging with current parish communications.
- The majority of respondents identified themselves as White, which seems to line up with demographic data for the area from the 2011 census.
- With over 70% of respondents not currently volunteering there could be a great opportunity to engage people further with the right invitation.

Key findings

- 95.7% of respondents identified the newsletter by email as how they currently receive news and information about parish activities, followed by the website and the newsletter at mass.
- Respondents are comfortable with web-based communication methods, although this could be expected from an online survey. Only 2 paper-based responses to the survey were received. 97.1% of survey respondents identified email as a preferred method of communication.
- In descending order of priority, respondents identified the following information as important for them to receive –
 1. Mass times
 2. Introductions to clergy and people of the parish
 3. Neighbourhood and community news
 4. Homilies and other spiritual content
 5. Parish charitable initiatives
 6. Parish social events
 7. Parish spiritual activities
 8. Diocesan news
 9. The Environment Group
 10. Sacramental Preparation
 11. News from the Parish schools
 12. Youth and family activities
- 45.3% of respondents prefer a mixture of short updates and longer articles. There were 6 specific references to Edgeways made in the comments.

- Recurring themes from the comments of respondents included an interest in volunteering opportunities: more regular communication about what help is required and how this is organised, and a desire for more two-way communication: suggestion boxes, Parish AGM.
- There were comments related to accessibility: an enquiry as to whether communications are suitable for screen readers and voice recognition software and a desire for more inclusive language.

About the respondents

- 55.8% of respondents have been a parishioner for over 15 years. There was a minority of respondents (12.3%) who have only been in the parish for 1-5 years and 5.8% for less than a year.
- 44.6% of respondents were in the 55-74 age bracket with 26.6% in the 40-55 age bracket.
- 71% of respondents identified themselves as female.
- 61.9% of respondents identified themselves as White British, with a further 21.7% of respondents identifying themselves as of another White background.
- 70.3% of respondents identified themselves as married.
- 71.8% of respondents said they did not volunteer with any parish groups.
- When those who volunteer were asked what groups they are involved with the answers included: liturgy groups (music, reading, flowers) and eucharistic ministry, the environment group, the SVP and the soup run.

Who was excluded?

- While the response to the survey has been good, it is important to consider who may not have responded, and therefore perspectives not being taken.
- No one under 25 years old responded to the survey, suggesting that the newsletter by email is not an effective communication tool to reach this audience.
- Young families may be under-represented in the survey. The lower priorities given to youth and family activities and news from the parish schools could suggest that families are engaging with the newsletter by email to a lesser degree
- The respondents overwhelmingly identified as female, which suggests that men are less likely to read and engage with parish news via the email newsletter (assuming that this is not a reflection of the demographics of our parish). However, given most respondents identified as married, this may be a reflection that, in a couple, it is more likely to be the wife who engages with parish activity in this way. It may be worth foregrounding female voices to a greater extent to ensure the language we use reflects our audience.
- Having said this, there is obviously work to be done to reach a male audience and it may be that the general newsletter is not the most convenient communication channel for this group.