



---

# *Communities of Faith*

## *Merton Deanery*

---

What our young people need from their  
Catholic faith communities post covid.

---

*Contents*

---

***Executive Summary .....03***

***Background and Objectives.....06-08***

***Methodology..... 08***

***Survey Results and Analysis..... 09***

***Church Attendance.....09***

***Mass Experience in school and parish church.....09***

***Youth activities in the parish church.....09***

***Role Models.....10***

***Life Challenges.....10-11***

***Faith in action.....11***

***Conclusion and Recommendations.....11- 14***

***Appendices - Questionnaire- Themes arising.....15-17***

## Executive Summary

This research was undertaken in order to work on the paper from the Deanery entitled ***connecting communities of faith***. This paper asked how we can care for people, communities and our environment. It posed the central questions: How do we rebuild our community and how can we best serve them? In order gain an insight and some answers to these questions for our young people we asked students aged 9-19 that identified as catholic within our Deanery schools to answer an online survey.

The methodology employed in this research were anonymous online surveys. To provide us with realistic responses from students, parents, staff, governors and parishes. 1332 9–18-year-old and 365 teachers, parents, governors and parishes completed the survey between the 19<sup>th</sup> of September and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Meaning 1697 people took part in the surveys. Then we set up focus groups for students of all key stages and interviewed parents, school staff and governors from our primary and secondary schools. Listening to the individual responses of a further 68 people so in total 1760 people were surveyed, took part in focus groups or were interviewed.

This paper identifies and examines the <sup>1</sup>‘disconnection points’ for children their families and schools that contribute to poor post pandemic church attendance, that allow failures/barriers to formation exacerbate the concerns of our young people and their families. It will identify ways in which young people can best connect with their faith community, what activities help them get to know the person of Jesus Christ, how they can better grow in understanding of how much they are loved by God. It will outline its effects and how schools and parishes need to become more aligned in their thinking and actions for young people. Where they are not synchronised, this leads to alienation or apathy about the communities they once felt a part of.

### [Students in key stage 2](#)

Mass is an important community event, and they were disappointed when they didn’t see their friends there. They wanted to see more overt celebration of their cultural backgrounds. During covid they missed singing hymns and worship songs they expressed this was a really important and enjoyable form of worship which some say is still minimal in their parishes post covid. They sometimes experience doubts about certain theological issues but not their faith and would like to have a person or some time dedicated to exploring these questions as they don’t want to discuss them with their parents for fear they may ‘disappointed’ in them. They would like more activities in their parish church and the staff interviewed expressed an interest in facilitating this. 96% of years 5 to 6 said they would still go to mass when they are older. The wants of this age group in demands of their faith formation were fairly simple and realistic. They would like to go to Mass and see their

---

<sup>1</sup> Complex Catholicism

friends afterwards, they want to learn about Bible stories in a fun way and they want to ask questions about their faith without fear of disappointing people.

### Students in key stage 3

In this category year 7 students church attendance had gone back to just below pre covid levels but years 8 and 9 had dropped by 50%. The majority of those who declared their attendance was less frequent cited busyness and time as the reason. These students had found other things to fill their Sunday with and found no reason to go back to Mass. At this age their involvement in school liturgy lessened however over 90% became involved in faith in action activities in school. In year 7 particularly many students asked for a quiet place of reflection that they could go to during breaks and lunch times when asked to expand on this in interviews many said that the transfer to secondary school and the size could be intimidating, and they wanted a place to pray or be led in prayer to collect their thoughts. Years 8 and 9 frequently stated that trips and religious pilgrimages interested them and in particular they would like to visit the Holy Land.

### Students in key stage 4

Pre covid church attendance had dropped by 50% with students attributing this to now being busy. At this 70% of students are listening to the homily but less than 50 % attend activities in their parish. Here they stated that they wouldn't want to be involved in activities in their parish they have already established routines outside of their church community. The numbers drop even further when looking at school liturgies and collective worship 75% say they rarely or never become involved. The majority do not think there is a person they consider a role model. These students are very clear that there are plenty of opportunities in their schools and parishes to take part in faith in action. They expressed a need to be "helped to understand God more, for those who are confused about or questioning their faith" this was quite a common theme in this age group. Some expressed the idea that "I am not sure if I am spiritually fulfilled at school and church" This expresses the desire for something more from their collective worship experiences and other students expressed is as wanting something that involved more singing and an interactive experience.

### Students in key stage 5

Most students at this age are attending Mass weekly and monthly are at with the same frequency they were pre-covid which is 45% of those surveyed. Those attending weekly and monthly are exactly the same now as they were pre-covid. However, 30% of those who attended occasionally dropped into the never category post covid. Those that are not attending attribute it to being too busy. When the priest gives his homily, many feel unable to act on it and say it's more directed towards the adults and they are not sure what they can do. This suggests that although they are young adults, they feel powerless to act and have said there is no guidance from the church or parishes. They also stated that different priests have different messages, and they understand them all but don't feel they are things they can necessarily act or work on. When asked what they would like to see in school and parishes they said music festivals, workshops, interschool masses. They also wanted a person to ask 'God questions' to. To ask things like "why did God allow this to happen to me?" Very few students in this age category were involved in church activities they did not see this

as option for them. Like the other ages their best church experiences were those where there was sung worship but also a time of reflection and silence.

### Staff and Parents

The majority of the staff felt that there is a problem with the welcome at our parishes. People believe that it has become cold or at times formalised because of covid. No members of a parish were able to say that there was a welcoming party at their parish for new parishioners or to welcome back old ones after lockdown. Parents felt that their parish churches were not reaching out to their young people in terms of their faith journey and spiritual direction. When asked what they thought could change that they stated that if the adults had better formation, they could help the children and if it was lay led people would feel freer to speak and have open faith discussions. Some staff and parents said they offered to help during the pandemic, and no one ever called them. They recognised that there are different issues in different parishes and with so many people it's difficult to co-ordinate and get people interested in community events. Some parishes offered only a one thing for children usually a children's liturgy and they are still not back on. Staff said, "People have filled their Sundays with other things and the church has not provided other things". Staff felt the expectations from the children in terms of confirmation preparation was too much and bureaucracy and safeguarding created barriers that people couldn't be bothered to navigate. Some cited arbitrary decision making on the part of the priest as reason why some will not get involved in youth activities. Some parents stated the only thing tying them to their current parish was their child's school but when the child leaves, they may consider looking around to join a different church.

### Governors

Governors thought the parish church fulfilled these main functions during covid: A place where young people could still belong and seek help and support, to reach out and support their faith and their wellbeing, retaining a connection between school and the church and to provide online streaming of Mass services. Governors said the main activities provided by their parishes were youth groups and sacrament preparations. Apart from youth groups recommencing they didn't know of any specific focus or plans their parishes had coming up to the new liturgical year. Most could not cite any example of something that their parish does to celebrate diversity. 50% of the governors surveyed were not aware of anything their parishes were doing to engage their young people in faith in action. It was the same for developing their spirituality and prayer life. With regards to encouraging young people back to church 80% of governors said there was nothing explicit in their parish to encourage young people and their families back to church. 90% of governors were not aware of any school or parish plans to help young Catholics negotiate life challenges such as loss of faith, mental health or sexuality which can contribute to them not attending Mass. With regards to future implications if young people's needs are not met Governors responded they could predict a falling Catholic roll in our schools and Catholics who don't fully understand the faith. They all stated that if the formation needs are not met young people will lose their faith and that they needed a place where their questions on matters of faith can be listened and answered. Governors acknowledged that their schools have done a lot to address social issues, but the churches need to consider engaging with them.

## Parishes

75% of the parishes that responded said they meet with its youth on a weekly basis the other 25% said they never meet with them. They saw their most important function during the pandemic as encouraging people to attend Mass online, phone support, support through schools and supporting families. During the pandemic 75% said they did try to keep contact with young people by 'moving online'. All parishes said they don't do anything or anything specific to celebrate diversity. Parishes saw their priorities for the parish's youth as confirmation preparation. When it comes to engaging young people in faith in action parishes said they 'encourage' it but were never specific about how this happened and the same when it comes to helping its young people back to church. Parishes were unable to be specific with regards to the challenges and opportunities a more ethnically diverse parish can bring. Although some said it brings a variety of gifts, they were not specific about what those gifts were and how they could be used. All parishes were very clear that when it comes to negotiating life's challenges such as sexuality, gender, loss of faith and mental health which makes young people feel excluded from the community. This was for schools and families to discern, and they had no plans to help here. However, they were open for blessings and confession. One parish did say that their model of youth ministry means young people know they free to voice their opinions and thoughts.

## **Background and Objectives**

This helps to explain the context in which Headteachers are working

- The new Catholic Schools Inspection National framework highlights the intrinsic relationships between Parish and School and how important these relationships are from childhood to early adulthood.
- Headteachers are aware of the falling admission rolls in Catholic schools in London and the changing demographics across London coupled with the closure of Catholic schools in the Diocese
- Headteachers are aware of the impact of covid on church attendance and on the experience of young people in receiving the sacraments. We are also aware of the disruption to the programmes of confirmation and communion and reconciliation. Within school secondary school the disruption to the training of Eucharistic Ministers
- Headteachers are also aware of the positive impact of creative liturgies on for example the environment, equalities and the use of technology but also the decrease in opportunities to be active disciples.
- Communities are also experiencing loss and unquantifiable impacts from lack of connectivity. Mental health and well-being concerns have increased considerably.
- Young people are expressing a demand for change from the church in terms of equalities race gender and sexuality as part of a global movement.

- There is a growing shortage of both specialist RE teachers and Catholic teachers and leaders in schools.

The purpose of this paper is to give practical recommendations to Headteachers and parishes to establish and build upon faith formation provision for our young people. The surveys will give us new information about how young people see their current faith provision and ideally the things they would like provided to help them navigate it post mid-pandemic.

A research project called Complex Catholicism identified young people in the older age ranges 15–25-year-olds and put them into typologies of Catholic. From this it was able to state how these young Catholics identify themselves and what they do in practice. The study brought out many questions about how parishes are supporting their young people and the points of disconnection and why they say they attend mass irregularly or not at all. This research which took place in 2018 is pre covid. However, some of our findings support this study such as their experience of being welcomed in a church *“48% of young Catholics agree they have felt welcomed in their local catholic parish”*<sup>2</sup> The study discusses sources of support but does not delve into how we could make a parish church a source of support by talking with trusted people. The study states that young people are becoming increasingly concerned about terrorism, sexual orientation and gender inequality. It then poses the question *“are there practical ways you can help young people address the issues they feel most concerned about?”* It asks *“What plans could you make to help young Catholics to help negotiate life transitions which they say stops them attending mass?”* Because this study already identified that young Catholics agree that supporting others who experience injustice is important to the way they live their lives. We were able to ask them where did they get these opportunities from, and would they like to be provided with more? It also meant we could ask parishes and schools their plans or what they already had in place to provide these. Our paper will offer recommendations for the answers to all these questions provided by young people themselves with the input of parents, the people that teach them and the governors of their schools.

Covid has ravaged our society and the world. The fall in church attendance was fuelled by a number of factors. We already have falling congregation numbers and disengagement from our young people when it comes to Church attendance. Covid struck and churches closed. As churches started to reopen they had to put barriers and restrictions in place to be covid safe; this made it hard for people to return in the way they had gone to church before. Booking systems, limited numbers, societies and clubs closed until further notice. All this meant that return to church and our communities was/is not the same.

Drawing on evidence taken from our primary and secondary schools, this paper aims to examine how a lack of alignment between the parish churches priorities and our young people’s priorities hampers schools’ efforts to welcome young people back to physical church and reuniting the community.

It also puts the young people out of the parish community without any other avenue except school where they have community liturgies. Another concern is that our young people have had barriers put in their way when it comes to receiving the blessed sacrament. Excommunication through community failures. We gathered information to understand their faith experiences in the context of covid. Within this we will suggest action our communities can take to overcome this. Taken from the

---

<sup>2</sup> Complex Catholicism, Matthew van Duyvenbode 2018 page 20

<sup>3</sup> Complex Catholicism Matthew van Duyvenbode 2018 page 12

<sup>4</sup> Complex Catholicism Matthew van Duyvenbode 2018 page 24

stakeholders within the community; students, parents, governors, parishes and staff. We will formulate recommendations with research from questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and research literature.

We had four main objectives

- To establish what are the failures/barriers.
- To know the concerns of our young people and their families.
- To make recommendations that could mitigate or completely eradicate these barriers/concerns within our faith communities.
- To identify ways in which young people can best connect with a faith community, what activities help them get to know the person of Jesus Christ, how they can better grow in understand of how much they are loved by God.

## **Methodology**

The participants for the online survey were any students, parents, staff or governor that self-identified as Catholic in a Merton Deanery school. This made them eligible to and qualified to answer the questions. The students who were part of focus groups were chosen based on the fact they were Catholic and a spread of gender and diversity that represented their school. The staff focus groups were made from any staff that wished to be part of the study again identifying as Catholics or in some cases engaged with the ethos of the school but not necessarily Catholic. The students, staff and parents that were interviewed were all Catholic and volunteered through their schools to be interviewed. As mentioned in the summary 1760 people took part in surveys, interviews and focus groups.

The types of questions we asked all related back to answering our objectives. They took the form of multiple choice or in the form of text response. Participants were asked about their Mass attendance habits, their involvement in collective worship and church services and also their faith in action and what more they would like to see in their parish and schools with regards to ways in which young people can best connect with a faith community, what activities would help them get to know the person of Jesus Christ and how schools and parishes guide them so they can better grow in understanding of God.

Parishes were also asked to fill an online survey as an objective of this study is to find out what schools and parishes can do independently and together to aid young people's formation. The request went to all eight churches in the deanery and four churches responded and took part.

## **Survey Results and Analysis.**

### ***Church Attendance***

Church attendance in the younger students those in years 5-7 and years 12 and 13 has gone back to pre-covid levels. The older students in years 8-11 have not returned to church in the way they once attended. Regular attendance has dropped by 50 %. Staff and parents responded in the same way and 50% have not returned to regularly weekly mass. When asked about encouraging church attendance and inviting young people and their families back to Mass parishes responded that they had encouraged through their newsletter and Mass attendance is compulsory through their sacramental programmes which has brought some families back.

### ***Mass Experience in school and parish church***

In schools students are involved in collective worship and as the students become older they are less likely to be involved regularly. By involved we mean taking an active part not just being present. In years 5 and 6 90% students said that they had been involved in school worship. In year 7 this dropped to 78%. In Year 8 and 9 69% then to 62% in years 10 and 11. By the time they are in sixth form 69% say they are involved. Years 12 and 13 When questioned in interview about why this might be many responded they are involved in their own churches to a large extent.

When the priest speaks and gives his homily in years 5 and 6 82% say that they always/sometimes understand the message he is asking them to take away. Secondary school students were asked about how often do they listen to the priest's homily. In year 7 77%, in year 8 and 9 74% in year 10 and 11 60% and in Years 12 and 13 67% say they always or sometimes listen. This downward trend until they reach sixth form may indicate a lack of engagement until they become old enough to have more concentration and have made decisive decisions about engagement in their faith.

### ***Youth activities in the parish church***

Weekly involvement in the parish church for years 12 and 13 was 9%. For years 10 and 11 12%, years 8 and 9 20%, year 7 20% and for 21% years 5 and 6. This is clear trend to be less involved the older a student becomes.

Students who were never involved in activities tended to be in years 12-13 75% of those surveyed said they were not ever involved in activities in their church. This means that those students who were interviewed and said that the reason they didn't take part in school liturgies is because they were involved in their own parishes must be in a minority. The conclusion must be that very few older students are actively involved in the parish activities offered such as youth groups, altar serving etc.

Groups and activities that students wanted to see were numerous the most popular were:

Key stages 2 and 3 – Wanted to be involved in things like drawing clubs that included this creative element but also gave them a chance to talk to the person sitting next to them. They also were interested in learning more about Bible stories.

Key stages 4 and 5- Their ideas became more about trips, pilgrimages and retreats. Also, discussion groups that discuss topical societal issues and the place of Christian within them.

All ages said they would like to see more clubs/activities that seek to help the environment and halt climate change.

The most popular social events which they said would help community encounter included:

Day trips, art clubs, film nights and extended travel opportunities.

### ***Role Models***

In interviews and focus groups it was clear that students wanted a role model and envisaged this person as someone who lived life as a good Christian and someone they could talk. Younger students described a role model as a person who is “Sensible and kind” a person who ‘involves’ them. In the online survey lots of years 5 and 6 named teachers, nuns, priests, parents and family.

Students in years 7 to 9 described a role model in their church as someone who “understands you” and “is caring and takes the time to listen”

Students in years 10 and 11 were able to describe who and what they would see as a role model. “I would like to see someone my age doing key roles in the parish” Someone who “Pushes me to use my faith and have a strong mind” along with “more cultural characters”. Many students in this age bracket need to ‘see it to be it’

Year 12 and 13 40% said there was someone in their parish they considered a role model “Someone who listens to our day-to-day issues and someone who is kind and accepting” For the older students this fed into the question we asked them about negotiating their faith and what they would like to see in their parishes. Some respondents said they would like to see a LGBT faith space others said they would like to see testimonies from other young people who lost their faith and found it again.

A notable number of students said they would like to see someone of their ethnic background as a role model in their church.

### ***Life Challenges***

When it came to negotiating life’s faith challenges such as a loss of faith, sexuality, gender and mental health. The survey and in interviews/focus groups they were asked different age-appropriate questions. For example, years 5 and 6 were asked would like us to provide to help them with their faith journey? And how could we help them with any faith doubts? They’re answers to this were clear. They would like to have trusted adults to listen to them. Older students were much more interested in seeing groups that represented everyone in their community. Faith groups for LGBTQI and faith groups that represented their cultural heritage and background.

The parish questionnaire asked if the parishes had made any plans to help young Catholics negotiate life's challenges which makes them feel excluded from the community. One parish responded that their youth ministry model made it clear that all questions could be asked. However, all other parishes that took part said they had no plans and that they felt this was an area for schools and family to discern.

### ***Faith in action***

The majority of every age group of students were aware of faith in action opportunities in their **school** Key stage 2 84% were aware of opportunities. All key stage 3, 4 and 5 93% of respondents said they were aware of opportunities in their school.

The majority of every age group of students were aware of faith in action opportunities in their **parish** Key stage 2 73% were aware of opportunities. All key stage 3, 4 and 5 84% of respondents said they were aware of opportunities in their parish.

When asked what else would they like to see offered students said:

Years 5 and 6: Parent appreciation session, visiting the elderly, collecting for charity. Many were not sure how to respond to this.

Key stages 3, 4 and 5. Many responded in with the same answers as they did to the activities question. However here the major response that they would like more ways to 'understand God how he helps people in certain ways as many people feel like God does not help them when they call out to them which could be a cause of loss in the faith.' "More retreats and acceptance for certain groups of people, e.g., LGBTQIA+ community." "To go to hospitals and talk to little children or go to care homes"

Most students felt that school and parishes provided these opportunities it is more the community activities that are absent or lacking in variety.

### ***Conclusion***

The failures in our communities are: Lay people not feeling empowered to act or have ideas considered and implemented without the input or permission from the priest, a lack of acknowledgement from the parish that lay people are entitled to and should be independently active in their parish communities, a shortage of communication between schools and parishes, a lack of willingness to engage with schools from most parishes, no training or opportunities for young people to develop their skills and talents for the good of the community, no obvious offer to young people welcoming them back to something better so that they choose to go back to church, not listening or canvassing the opinions of young people so we can respond to their needs, not looking outwards for new ideas for the engagement and retention of our young people and the exclusion of some people by not being active disciples and welcoming new members to the community or looking after current ones who feel isolated due to gender or sexuality.

There are of course the priests and parishes that work hard to engage young people and those that simply do not have the time or resources. Here they consider it the schools and family's duty to provide all opportunities in regard to their faith and that their role is solely sacramental. The barriers are that although staff and governors are aware of this there is not enough open dialogue to resolve

this for fear of schools offending hard working parishes and parishes being unable to resource any ideas that come out of any collaborative and creative ideas. However, within all the interviews and surveys many staff, parents and governors declared that they or people they know would be willing to volunteer if they had been reached out to.

Here we have been able to get to know better young people's concerns which lie in their faith doubts and limited avenues to ask personal faith questions, the idea that their churches are no longer functioning the way they once did with community gatherings and the fact that music in worship is very important to them. They fear the pandemic may mean things will never return to the way they once were.

All the young people surveyed, questioned in a focus group or interviewed were clear that community events in person were the best way to encourage their participation in the community. The ideas they shared with us although may not always have been practical still shared the same sentiment that they have not lost their desire to be part of a faith community and all the adults interviewed and surveyed have not lost their desire to facilitate this.

## **Recommendations**

### **Deanery Level**

1. Deanery churches to meet with Headteachers and establish an agreed action plan which incorporates the recommendations of this study for the formation of our young people and to feed into the work of Southwark's Archdiocese programme for the mission led church.
2. Headteachers to agree with their parish churches on the recruitment of parish leads to aid the work of the agency for evangelisation and catechesis. This would feed into the recommendations numbered 3 and 19 of this report. [Parish Leads — Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis \(rcaos.org.uk\)](https://www.rcaos.org.uk/parish-leads)
3. Headteachers to support the sacramental work of the parish by recruiting staff from their school to lead confirmation and first holy communion preparation freeing up other members of the parish to work on other youth projects or for staff to help with the youth projects.
4. Headteachers to hold seminars for Deanery parishes to help them understand the cultural traditions and history of their schools and young people. To give context to the specific needs of their young people. Provide practical ideas about how they can be incorporated into liturgies. Schools to help guide and plan this with the parish. (Recommendation 8 feeds into this).
5. Parishes to share how they are welcoming young people back and what they are welcoming them back to. Parishes can exchange ideas about how they are doing this and also ask for mentoring from the Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis. This is available from the Archdiocese. [Come Home — Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis \(rcaos.org.uk\)](https://www.rcaos.org.uk/come-home)
6. The Deanery through schools and parishes to listen and respond to the synod questions either posed by the Diocese or ones made to fit their school's context in order with the guidelines.

## *Schools*

7. Schools should reach out for willing volunteers (invitational) to help parishes deliver activities. Many parishes would like to offer youth programmes but have no one to co-ordinate and/or facilitate.
8. Schools should hold collective worships that incorporate students' cultural suggestions. From different ways to doing 'The Peace' to songs or even different cultures entrance or leaving traditions.
9. Schools can introduce talented young people and musicians to parishes where they can use their gifts and talent in liturgies.

## *Parishes*

10. Parishes should have welcoming committee at the front of the church welcoming new parishioners and welcoming back regular ones. This should be a permanent fixture in Deanery churches. Taking contact names and numbers. New parishioners should receive a welcome phone call from a regular member of the parish.
11. Parishes should resume any of their youth programmes as soon as possible. If they are currently unable to welcome back old volunteers/staff, then new ones should be recruited. If there is no momentum for this a youth committee with adults and young people should be formed to look at ways to welcome the parish you and create a vibrant youth programme.
12. Parishes should invest in an 'Alpha' type programme for young people aged 15-19. This format encourages community and encounter.
13. Parishes visit schools and encourage students and parents to come to church and they can experience a young people's liturgy and one that will welcome families. The first step is to agree a Sunday when the diversity of the parish is displayed in art and celebrated through the liturgy.
14. Parishes should reach out to schools to hold joint events and invite their schools to events paid or free. They should particularly consider taking groups to Christian music events and pilgrimages.
15. Parishes need to have an agreed framework for welcoming back young people as not all young people experience the same input in their parishes. Parish Priests have to agree that this is an important part of being a Catholic and recognise the need to reunite the church and the school. Also recognise that the parish has many lay people willing to make this happen they just have to reach out and ask. Parishes need to review their liturgies, their music and how they welcome those who feel excluded. Parishes need to make explicit that **all** are welcome.
16. Parish churches should consider a policy of seating young people on the front row so the priest can talk to them directly.

## *Families*

17. Schools and Parishes together to formulate and host joint formation sessions for parents in a blended format of online and in person. Empowering them to have conversations at home.

## *Young People*

18. School prayer leaders that are linked to their parishes and can join the prayers of the school and the parishes.

19. Young people want quiet reflective spaces in their school that they can use. Some suggestions have been a children and adults colouring club (years 5 and 6) as this is a time when children can be engaged in an activity but talk to an adult and ask questions that may be on their mind about their faith.
20. Young people would like to see more of themselves in their church buildings for example artwork and decorations from their cultural backgrounds. Parishes could agree a Sunday when the diversity of their parish is displayed in art and celebrated through the liturgy.

### *Schools and Parishes Together*

21. Schools and parishes should consider appointing or asking for listening volunteers from their staff or parent body. These adults should be practicing Catholics who would listen to young people's questions and try to facilitate them finding an answer through reading, prayer or contemplation.
22. We must make a considered response to the questions of the Synod. All schools and parishes should be part of this process and then the follow up responses.
23. Training young people in new music and liturgies for parishes and schools. Then providing opportunities for them to share this liturgy in Deanery parishes. There could be a rolling programme of youth provided/contributed liturgies that 'tour' the Deanery.
24. Young people of all ages want to hear testimony and people's stories. Parishes and schools should regularly encourage older young people to talk to the younger ones about their positive faith experiences. Young people want to hear real life stories about how prayer changed people's lives or other religious experiences.
25. Once young people finish their first holy communion preparation, they actually quite miss it for a while. Churches need to consider follow on sessions after sacramental programmes.
26. Parishes and schools need to be more open to ideas from other Christian denominations. Successful engagement programmes are available for youth groups such as messy church and youth alpha.
27. Schools and Parish Priests to collaborate on Masses and important liturgical events. Planning events together will increase engagement. Sharing homilies mean that schools could help add any current issues they are experiencing, and the priest could address this through his homily if possible and appropriate.





