

Church of the Most Precious Blood, Sidmouth

Towards a new Parish Pastoral Council

December 2025

Dear fellow parishioner,

Our Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) was originally set up to provide Father Paul with the views of a wide range of parishioners on pastoral issues (how we can participate in bringing Christ to people and bringing people to Christ) and other aspects of parish life.

Fr. Paul has asked the parish to form a new PPC and, in particular, how it could be updated to reflect the Catholic Church's recent documents on Synodality.¹ He invited a few parishioners to form a working group to explore what a reimagined PPC might look like and how it could support our work within our own church and wider community.

In order to keep our new PPC fit in the future, we need to give greater space to the Holy Spirit to guide us as we journey together. This synodal way of working is not just for Sidmouth, but is happening in all parishes across the world.

Last month, all parishioners were invited to two meetings to share and feedback on some initial ideas / principles which the working group would build on when exploring a reimagined PPC. If you weren't able to come along, or just want to know more about how things will move forward, this summarises the feedback and what will be happening next.

Initial thoughts

To understand how the future PPC can support the parish in its activity, a framework was presented to simplify or categorise the large number of activities we undertake into a few focus areas. The three broad areas of activity identified in the framework were:

¹ **A synodal Church:** Pope Francis called a worldwide Synod process to look at how best the Catholic Church can fulfil its mission through hearing what the Holy Spirit is saying to every participant, resulting in a final document approved in October 2024 called "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission. For Pope Leo this means a church where every member has a voice and a role to play through prayer and reflection, creating opportunities of encounter as this is an important aspect of how we live our life as a church. It is also about developing a much more outward focused mission of the Church – going out to those in need and seeing Christ in them. For more detail you might like to look at resources produced by the School of Synodality

<https://www.schoolforsynodality.org.uk>

“operations” (the ministries that make our acts of worship work smoothly and prayerfully and the “business” of finance and buildings);

“growing in discipleship/spiritual growth”; and

“being missionary”.

Many of the activities parishioners are already involved with in our parish, in the community and at home already reflect a “synodal path” and will continue, flourishing as we allow the Holy Spirit into our hearts to guide us.

It is not envisaged that the PPC would be involved in the day-to-day working of the “operations” activities, but clear and respectful understanding, listening and communication between these will be important.

All parishioners will have a voice through periodic Forums on different aspects of parish life. These will give anyone in the parish the opportunity to come and share ideas, work on other parishioners’ suggestions, listen to the Holy Spirit together and be involved in decisions. A summary of those Forums would be shared with all parishioners.

The first two forums will be on:

The purpose of our future parish pastoral council on Sunday 25th January after mass in St Teresa’s Hall with coffee and other refreshments:

This is an important meeting for everyone and will discuss things like how a synodal PPC will feel different from those we might have experienced in the past, agreeing a timetable for the new PPC to be commissioned, to make sure everyone understands how it will work, who will form its initial membership and how the membership might change over time.

How we communicate with all those inside and outside our church. Date in February and venues to be confirmed. We are keen for ideas for how everyone’s suggestions will be graciously heard; digitally, face-to-face or by other means.

Other forums will cover major issues facing the parish and hopefully, include a youth forum – by the young people themselves.

Please feel free to talk to any one of us if you would like to know more or get involved.

Yours in Christ,

Elaine King - Michael Selby - Clare Simpson - Jane Palmer - Isabelle Wragg.

Summary from the two open parish meetings held on 22 October 2025

29 people came along and we heard a rich variety of views. The main issues raised were:

- what does synodality mean to how we do things and why is it important?
- we need clarity in the purpose of PPC and how a synodal PPC will be different.
- open parish forums broadly welcomed.
- transparency and better communications required.
- how to deepen and strengthen our own faith to be good and confident disciples.
- mission outside the church widely supported.

Specific feedback on the initial proposals for the **future structure** of our parish activity was inconclusive, but questions and discussions centred around:

- the future relationship between parishes and the priest;
- how to maintain the importance of the Eucharist and Priesthood;
- how to achieve transparency on who and how decisions are made;
- how people would be selected to the PPC and why;
- what would the relationship between the PPC and “operations” be;
- when should the new PPC be launched;
- listening to the beating heart of prayer amongst those not wanting to get involved in groups;
- better information required on parish finances and recommendations for decisions.

For the full summary of the feedback, please visit our parish website and do come along to the next forum which will take much of this forward, on **25th January after Mass, in St Teresa’s Hall** (coffee and other refreshments provided).