

Ginger Group meeting 2015-11-14

Apologies from CMcD, SB, AW, PS

Present: DW, RR, FW, MMcD, NR, LW, LW, PoB, JY, JB, PB, RD, MD, ND

Letter reading from Fr. RR. To be read at Masses 15th Nov; typed up by ND, paper copies distributed by hand/post over the following week/fortnight.

Last DSPG meeting last week - unfortunately unable to be attended by representative from our parish.

Recap of situation

Diocese in financial panic; Diocesan Strategy Planning Group (DSPG) launched to grasp the problem

DSPG has generated a list of parishes in a precarious position, based on four criteria:

- parish contribution to overall mission of diocese in medium term future (mass attendance, school, hospital chaplaincy), size & deprivation (spiritual and financial) of local population
- ability to place a priest, able to meet pastoral & missionary needs
- ability to meet costs of maintenance
- existence of a compatible neighbour, with a view to consolidation

Bardfield & Thaxted definitely at risk.

Meanwhile diocese also has big spiritual / evangelical drive: Proclaim 15. There seems to be some confusion as to whether objectives are spiritual or financial.

So, in order to get whole show running, identify change agents in all parishes of the diocese. Those agents to launch their own Ginger Group equivalents and come up with suggestions for future of those parishes. In some cases there is a luxury of time. others may face the chop sooner. Bardfield / Thaxted is borderline , largely because of existing Ginger Group. **We're probably one of the least eligible parishes.**

"The 72" now called "The Stewards of the Gospel". Go and create their local Ginger Groups and support the diocese making decisions.

In parallel the bishop is visiting clergy, explaining rationale, selling the idea to the clergy. Priests on the ground have their own views and the bishop hopes to smooth the way.

We in Bardfield/Thaxted also have a relationship with Fr. Andrew Headon, episcopal vicar for administration, who has been persuaded to come and visit us. We need to keep the conversation open - making sure we're not just a red box on a spreadsheet. It is an opportunity to influence him as reorganisation and/or closures are not yet a done deal. We are able to explore the feasibility of options and maybe come to a different decision - those are the criteria but what is the "right thing" to do - business-like vs. "discerning" decision making.

[Fr. RR] Add to the mix that there are likely to be changes to the shapes of deaneries -

Colchester & Essex, meeting with bishop. Our deanery is very active in comparison to others, partly because the current situation with likely closures was feared eventually.

[ND + CMcD] producing a buildings plan covering renovation work, site values
[PoB] reiterated that we can't spend more than £10,000, except on health & safety, without approval of diocesan finance committee.

A lot of the decisions to be made depend on timing - we can't hang around doing nothing until 2017 when the diocesan plans kick in whether we like it or not.

The demographics of clergy are such that maintaining a resident priest serving our small community is likely to be very difficult.

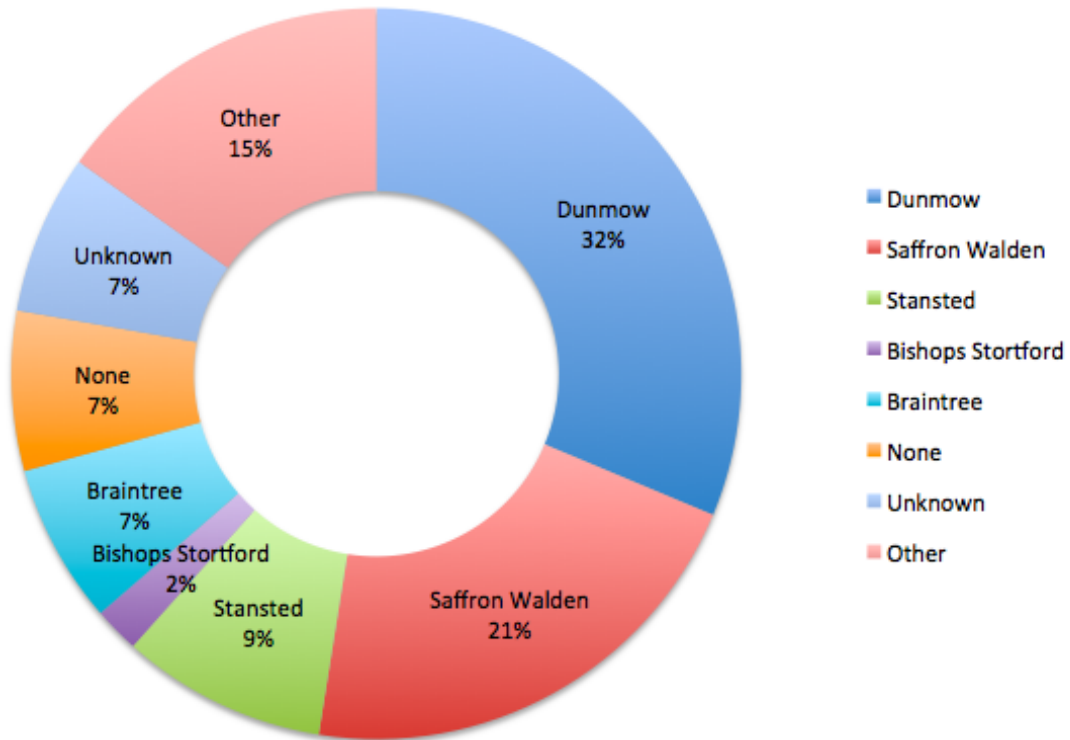
Robina's thoughts about use (below) are directed at our current situation but may be applied wherever the location - existing premises or new.

- Spiritual centre for North Essex, or an even wider area. Most available events/courses etc. are based in towns quite long distances away.
- Retreats / quiet days / days of recollection for priests / religious / laity from busy town parishes could have the opportunity to "come away for a while". Magdalen travels widely promoting quiet prayer - she could come to us!
- Prayer / discussion / instruction groups. Open to other denominations / faiths to join us or use for themselves.
- Centre for young people. Confirmation / First Holy Communion classes. Youth / activity days. Something aimed at teenagers / young adults. Canvey island is a long way away and the Walsingham House group do visit other locations. Magdalene at Clare no longer provides instruction for future confirmation candidates; Michele is not continuing next year. Young people from Gt. Dunmow are travelling to Saffron Walden for their preparation so there is a precedence for going somewhere other than their own parish for this.
- **Make ourselves known.** For example there is a Catholic Ramblers group in the Diocese and we could be a start/finish point. Access to- and use of the garden together with a decent kitchen and bathrooms could be significant plus points. There are plenty more similar possibilities.

Potentially significant thought: there are priests who are unable to cope with a large parish. We're able to make a case to support them, but question whether we are unique in that respect. RR mentions previous suggestion to vicar general for Dominican Oblates / community and appropriateness of the location and setup of Gt. Bardfield.

Again a reminder that we're not just tackling a parish-centric problem. It is necessary to consider a much broader deanery picture. Arguably less strain is placed on priests if co-located; even dreaming of school connectivity - much greater scope, forward thinking & evangelical approach. Saffron Walden, Barfield, Thaxted, Dunmow.

Where would parishioners go?



Back to Year of Mercy. What is the purpose of the church? To challenge people in witness - receive mercy & grace from God and go out into the community to impart mercy & grace. Spiritual renewal within the parish will encourage other people back into the Church, back into the parish and result in a stronger, more spiritually-productive, sustainable community.

So, why not have *The Bigger Picture* as number one on our list of options? Different site, consolidating other parishes in the deanery - make the parish a good, holy place to draw people in. We should aim to create something bigger than simply being self-sufficient. We need to provide a service for the diocese as a whole and certainly for what is currently the deanery.

Eucharistic ministry - logistic problems for those with mobility needs. Should be able to commit to assist with ministry and transport.

What would have to be true to have changing the place we worship be attractive enough? Bear in mind the home-parish-school triangle. The result would be a huge change in spiritual power.

commitment, foresight, engagement, community, planning => [PLAN] => sustainable parish short term => medium/long term.

DRAFT AGENDA 2015-11-28 - Church of the Holy Spirit, Great Bardfield & English Martyrs, Thaxted

Fr. Andrew: Introduction to long-term diocesan vision

The Ginger Group

- **Is a representative group of the Parishioners**
- **The GG commitment – consider/engage/review/provide vision & plan**
 - *carefully consider strengths and weaknesses to inform the future/engage with parishioners/seek quality feedback/consider feedback/establish the options/provide a VISION and a PLAN to deliver the vision*
- **Summary of feedback**
 - *possibly include the questionnaire and pie diagrams?*

The VISION is to create a sustainable group of village parishes – a ‘Super Parish of Villages’
that will enable the core strengths of the Parishes to further expand with community engagement assisted by flexible facilities and linking closely with local RC School

The PLAN

- **Current finances and opportunity to create additional short term income**
 - *from the residential accommodation at Great Bardfield. Neil/Conor to provide a paper summarising costs and potential income and programme*
- **Long term opportunity to create a new church facility**
 - *that has flexibility in its use to provide a community facility that can also be used by the Diocese & RC other interest groups in pursuance of Catholic values*
- **What an enhanced and consolidated church facility can deliver**
 - *primarily a place of worship for all sections of the Catholic community, a modern flexible building that could be utilised for a multitude of faith activities – liturgy/spiritual retreat/days of recollection for priests/prayer/instruction groups/centre for young people/confirmation/first holy communion/Eucharistic minister service to the older/disabled members of our Parish much of which is already provided in the Parish*
- **Timeline**
 - **Engagement with other adjacent Parishes - November/December**
 - **Initial design ideas and costing - January/February**
 - **Assessment of current Church locations and potential new locations ditto**
 - **Report the potential of the Parish existing buildings to the GG and Diocese**

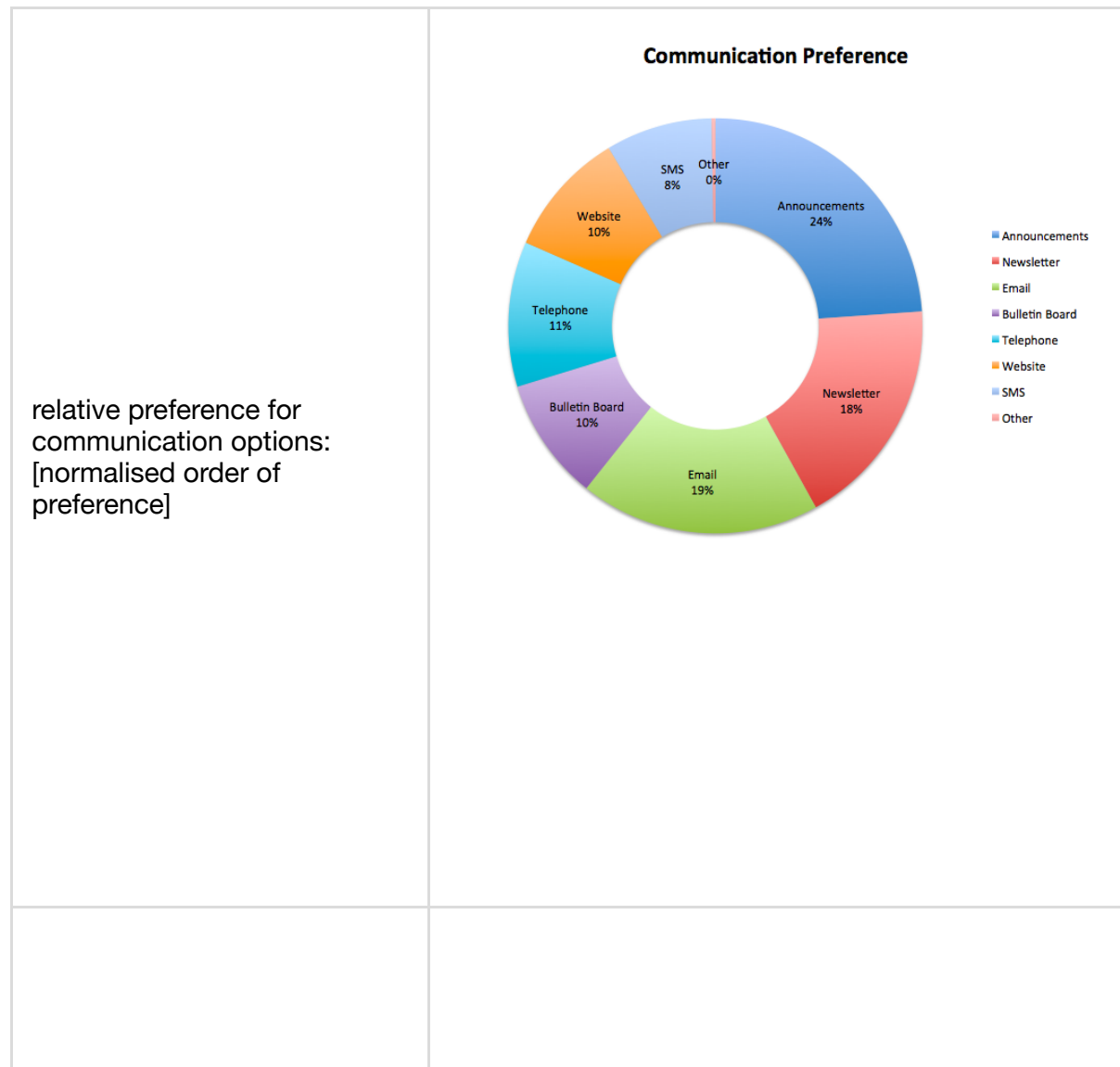
AOB

Ultimately this is a very family-friendly parish. Good facilities, welcoming etc. as evidenced from most of the survey responses. Our strengths are what goes on in the buildings, not the buildings themselves which are really only deficient in e.g. health & safety. We cannot settle for just keeping the show on the road.

AOB

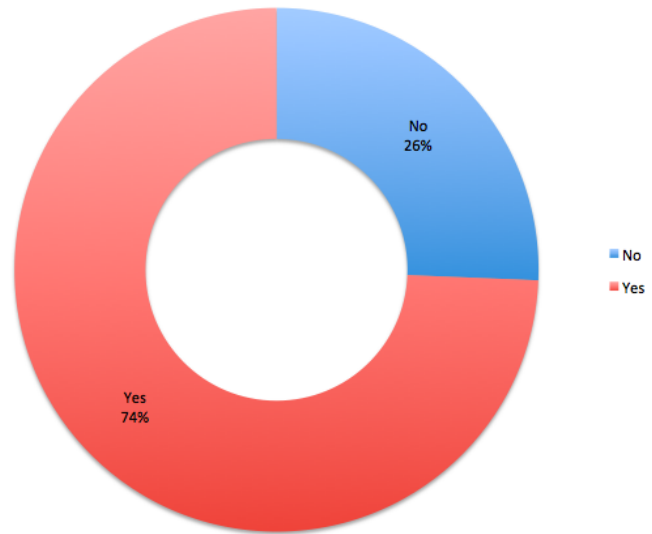
mass times on village websites (Thaxted & Bardfield)
 two eucharistic ministers & Thaxted & 2 in Bardfield.

Below are a few other graphics condensing some results from the survey. Comments welcome on which would be appropriate to share more widely, or requests for other charts not present.



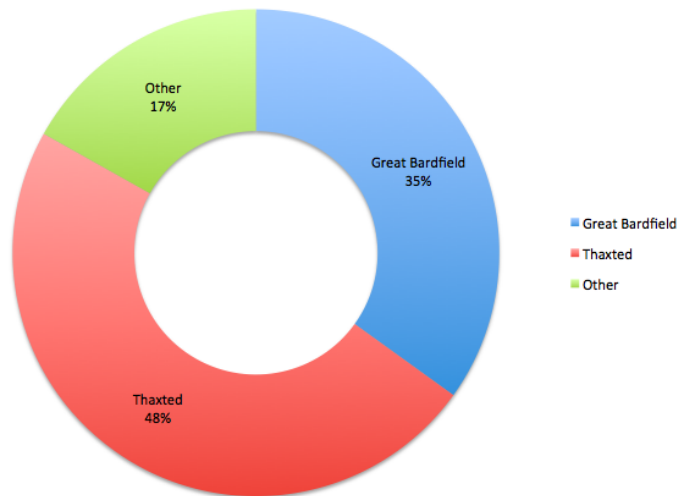
Are there non-Catholics in your family unit?

All-Catholic Family Unit?



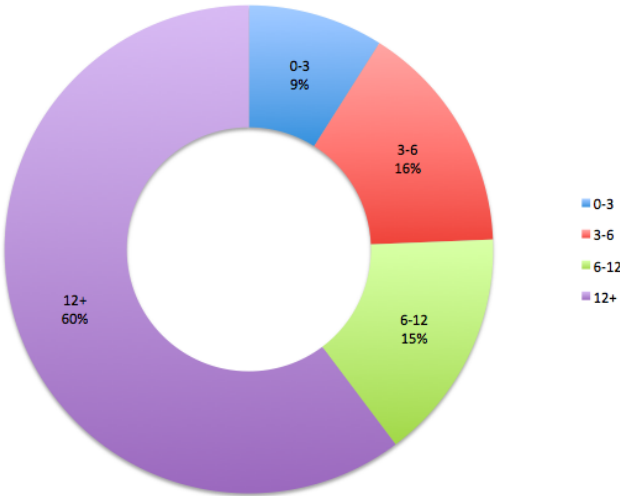
Which is your geographic home parish?

Home Parish



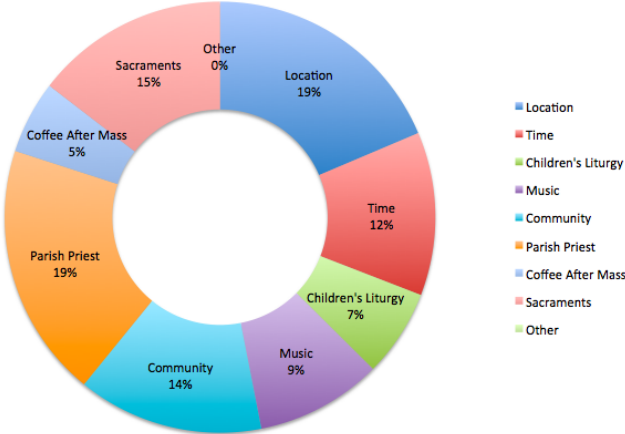
How many years have you attended this parish?

Years Attended



Why do you prefer to attend this parish? [normalised rank of preference]

Relative comparison of reasons for attendance

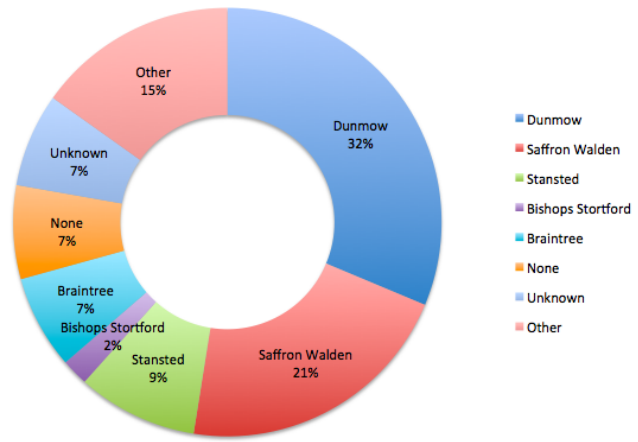


76% of parishioners attend their home parish.

58% of parishioners participate in one of the activity/working groups in the parish.

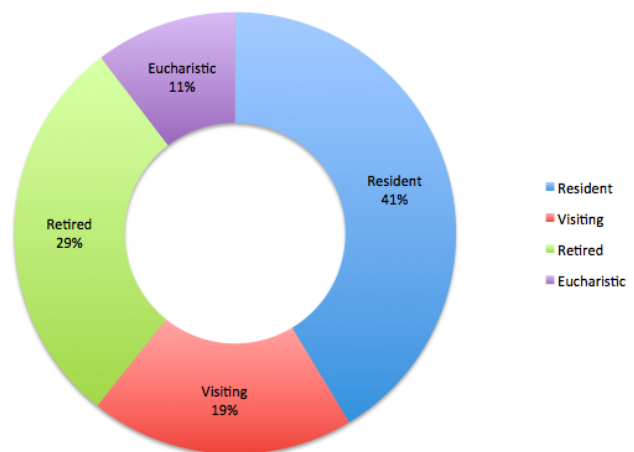
If the parish closed or merged, where would you attend Mass?

Where would parishioners go?



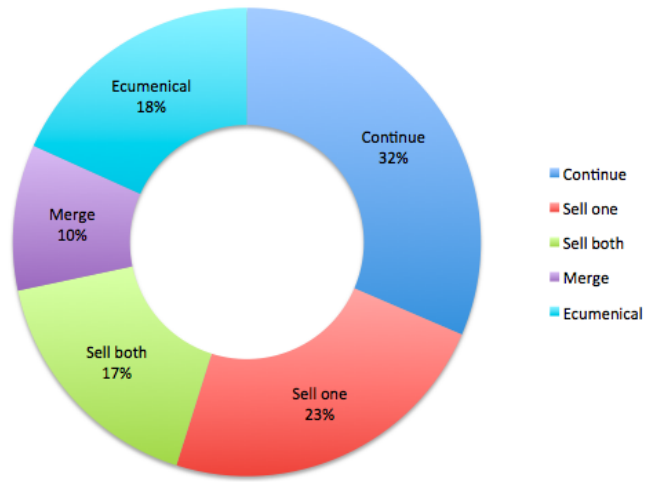
Celebrant options:
[normalised rank of preference]

Celebrant Options



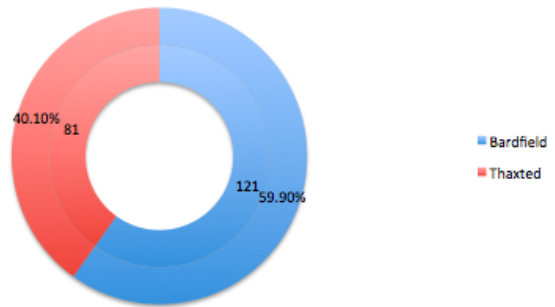
Building Options: [normalised rank of preference]

Building Options



Geographic split of parishioners:

Geographic Split



Age distribution: (there's something not quite right with this one - need to double check the calculation is accounting for children in family units correctly)

Age Distribution

