In January 2021, the Evangelisation Pillar carried out a survey called ‘Sharing the Good News’ in the parish. We would like to thank all those who took the time and trouble to take part, for their spirit of openness and the richness of their responses.

74 people responded, two thirds were women, a third were men. The response rate was highest amongst our older parishioners - more than half were 65 years of age or older. We would like to find new ways to gather ideas on this subject and engage those of all ages in the parish and welcome further insights parishioners may wish to share with us on this.

In the survey, respondents were invited to rate their commitment as Catholic Christians (ie someone who believes in God, tries to follow Jesus, practises their faith, prays and attends church as they are able) on a scale of 0 to 10. Commitment was high regardless of age group and sex, with an average commitment of 8.6, ranging from 6.4 to 10. Regarding Activity in the parish, nearly 80% called themselves Active. Of these, most are highly involved, reporting significant involvement with one or more parish groups.

Respondents were invited to outline the most significant moments in their faith journey so far - key moments when they have grown in their faith. Responses varied significantly. “Death of a family member” was mentioned by about a fifth of respondents. The sacraments (such as Baptism, Confirmation) and parish events (courses and retreats) were often key moments. Pilgrimages have been important to many. Many spoke of positive interactions with fellow parishioners, being made to feel welcome within the parish and being inspired by Fr David.

The survey asked: "How can the parish better support you in your faith development?", with nine possible ways listed. Virtually half referred to a retreat or a pilgrimage, with a third referring also to spiritual formation/ theology courses. All the suggested ways received some support. About a third of respondents added other thoughts, with further ideas.

Three questions related to the Alpha course, whether they had heard of it or been on such a course and whether they would be interested if the parish were to run one. 80% had heard about Alpha, although just under 20% had been on one. Over 20% would take advantage of a parish-arranged Alpha course with a further 40% saying that maybe they would.

The next question was "How can we in St James' reach out better to those of no faith and share the Good News?". Two-thirds of respondents provided comments here, and more than half of these had practical suggestions, which the Evangelisation Pillar will consider. There are many excellent ideas. Some would be substantial projects and would require teams to implement. About a quarter of the comments majored on the important point of 'By Example'. Some simply said that they thought the parish was doing a pretty good job! Overall, the responses to this question mostly are about what we DO rather than what we SAY.

Over a third may be interested in volunteering to help the Evangelisation Pillar in some way. We will be following up with respondents to explore this further. Please do get in touch on evangelisation@stjamespettswood.org if you may be interested in helping in some way.

The final question invited Any Other Thoughts or Comments. Nearly 40% of respondents were kind enough to provide some response here, of whom more than half had various interesting comments and suggestions, which the Evangelisation Pillar will be considering.

Overall, the Evangelisation Pillar is very grateful indeed to the respondents to the survey for their thoughtful responses, which will inform the work of the Pillar for quite some time ahead. St James' is very blessed.