St. Olave’s Church

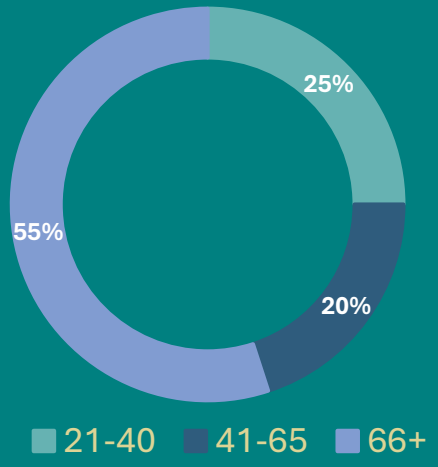
Parish Questionnaire 2025

Methodology

What You Need To Know

- 20 people responded – meaning that around 15% of members of the regular congregation took part. Some of the comments people left are lengthy and detailed.
- Over half of all respondents are 66 or older, while a quarter are 21-39. The rest (a fifth) are aged 41-65.
- An equal number of people submitted a paper response or responded via email.
- Comments have been coded thematically, to distil feedback into major themes.
- Verbatim quotes aligned to major themes have also been provided.

Who:



Why:

The Churchwardens asked members of the congregation to answer two questions, to inform the construction of the Parish Profile.

What:

1) What is it that you value about St. Olave's church?
2) How would you like to see us developing in the future?

How:

Executive Summary

Being a welcoming church, the liturgy and the music are all at the heart of who we are

- When asked what they currently value about St. Olave's now, the overwhelming majority of people mention the sense of community or welcoming nature of the church.
- Over half also mention the liturgy and style or worship, or the music.
- A smaller, but still significant, number directly mentioned inclusivity.
- This feedback reflects clear consensus: there is an established culture of the parish which the congregation values.

Most *'constructive'* feedback suggests we should maintain what we currently do

- Over half of respondents suggest that one thing the parish needs to 'develop' is to simply maintain what we already do well.
- Some celebrate the recent growth of attendance on Sundays, and suggest this means we are already doing well.
- Others suggest that a period of stability may be helpful in order to consolidate recent changes.

Other feedback on what we should develop is more disparate

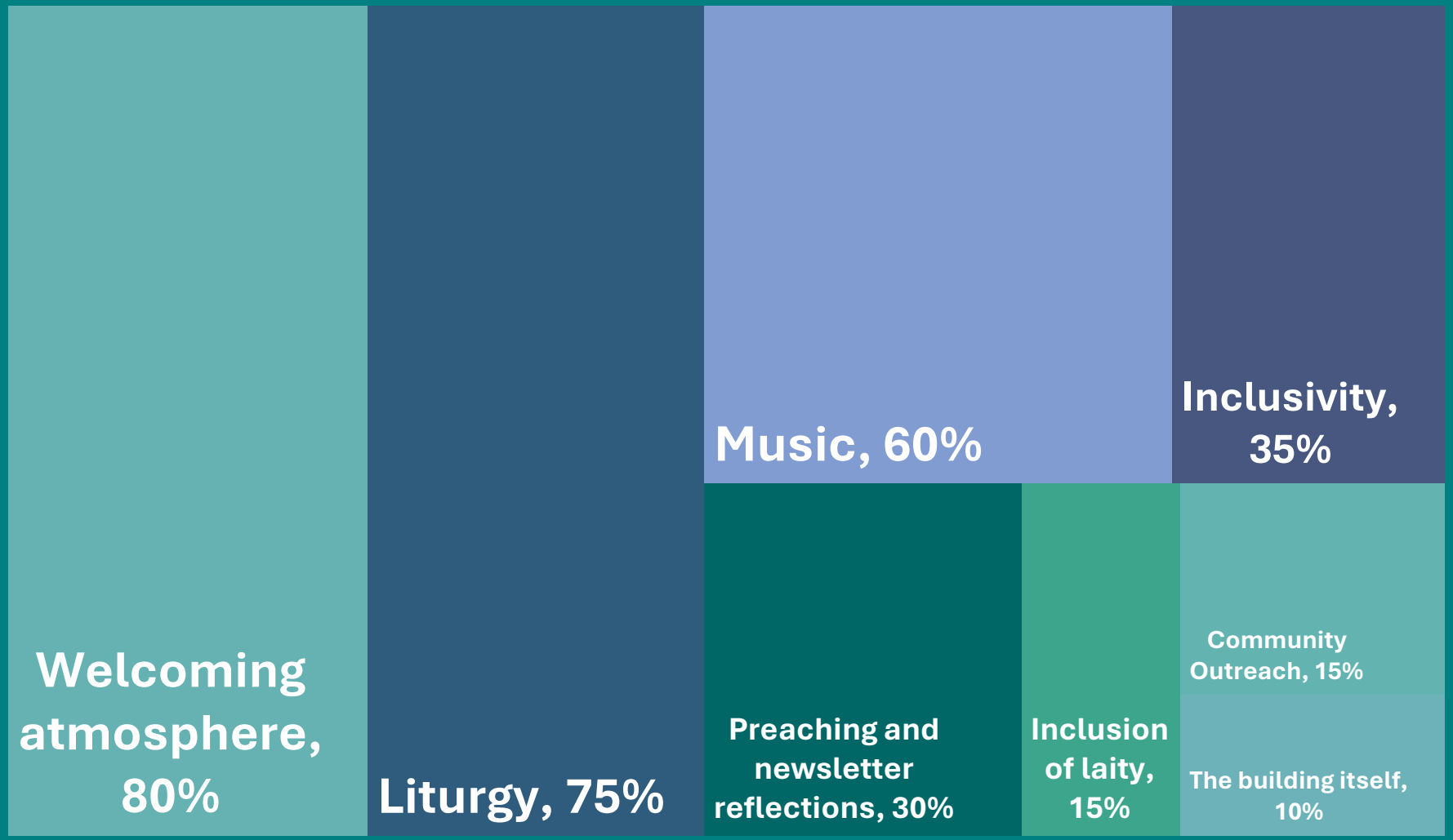
- Whereas there is a broad consensus on what people value about St. Olave's, there is a range of different ideas on what people would like to see us develop.
- 20% of respondents suggest that more could be done to make the parish welcoming to families and young children, that we could develop processes to welcome new people, or look to more community-based work.
- Other suggestions include more focus on young adults, or a greater number of discussion groups.

Clear consensus that we are a welcoming and inclusive church

What You Need To Know

- Four-in-five people say that the welcoming nature of the church is the thing they value about St. Olave's.
- Three-quarters mention the liturgy or style of worship, while over half talk about the music.
- 35% say they value the inclusive nature of the parish (especially the affirmation of LBGTQ+ people).
- Three-in-ten mention the quality of sermons or reflections in the newsletter.
- 15% talk about inclusion of lay people in worship and leadership roles or community work.
- One-in-ten discuss the aesthetics of the church and the churchyard.

What is it that you value about St Olave's church?



Verbatim feedback – top three thing we value

Welcoming atmosphere

People state that our welcoming and friendly culture is the thing the value most about St. Olave's – both the people themselves and the range of events and groups within the parish

The community and the general vibe at both services and additional events (e.g. All About Time)

Friendliness (very warm and welcome)

A great sense of community and togetherness.

I value lots of kind, thoughtful and intelligent people at St Olave's

Fellowship – there are a number of activities for the congregation to mingle, voices from the pews, the advent lunches, the walking group, the holy dusters, the bell ringers, Knit and natter and others

The Liturgy

People state that the liturgy is an important part of the character of the parish; some mention the quality of services in general, while others discuss the Liberal Anglo-Catholic tradition

Liberal / catholic ethos

I value the liturgy, with the openness to innovation

The Ritualism and high view of the Sacraments

Easy to follow service + music

I personally appreciate the dignity and richness of the worship at St Olave's

The Music

People value the music at St. Olave's, especially the choir and organists. Others mention the selection of hymns, or the music more generally

Music, the choir – we are a singing church

Wonderful organ / singing / hymns

Liturgy & music

I value the high quality of music

The quality of the music during the service but also the rehearsal before, giving a wonderful time to prepare for those members of the congregation who come early

Verbatim feedback – other things we value

Inclusivity

The welcoming atmosphere for LGBTQ+ people

Acceptance of women ministry. All inclusive, including LGTBQ+

Preaching and newsletter reflections

I truly believe that we are blessed with very high-quality preaching and exegesis during our sermons, and I also enjoy the reflections in our Parish newsletter.

Continue the high standard of liturgy and preaching

Inclusion of laity

The wisdom of many people in leadership roles, including the retired clergy and the PCC and churchwardens.

The Sunday morning liturgy (including the server team/'altar party', the choir & music, the celebrants & preachers)

Community outreach

Outreach work to the poor and marginalised and commitment to social justice

Reaching out into the local community

The building itself

Beautiful building and lighting

The church building (including the church hall as a secondary site), the church gardens

Focus on families and new ways to welcome people, and social outreach among suggestions

What You Need To Know

- Over half of respondents say we should keep on doing what we already do well.
- A fifth suggest we should do more to focus on families, find ways to welcome new people, or look to do more in the community.
- 15% of people would like us to focus more on young adults, provide more space for theological reflection and discussion, or look to develop socially-facing ministry.
- Smaller numbers of people suggest we could work more with other churches in the Group (including St. Martin and the Community of the Cross of Nails), focus on pastoral care, or improve the seating.
- Some simply express hope for a short vacancy.

How would like to see us developing in the future?

Verbatim feedback – maintain what we already do

What You Need To Know

- Many respondents say we should keep on doing what we already do well.
- There is a belief that the recent growth in the congregation is an endorsement of what we are doing.
- Other people suggest that they want St. Olave's to maintain its community feeling and friendly atmosphere.
- Some comments observe that there has been a lot of change recently, and suggest that some stability may be useful for the time being.

Everything is great! To plan to maintain the current situation.

Just bottle what we have now!!

Keep going with our values and talents, and we have them already!

To plan to be able to maintain what we are doing.

Keep the liturgy as it is – the numbers in the congregation are going up – we must be doing something right!

I hope we can continue to sustain the type of community and church which currently exists.

The parish needs some stability now, during which the very welcome changes to our congregation in recent years can be consolidated and built upon.

Continue the high standard of liturgy and preaching (though it would be good, at the 10.30am to aim for a 60 minute service rather than what is often a 90 minute service)

Verbatim feedback – top three suggestions

Be more family-friendly

People suggest more could be done to welcome families, especially through the development of specific initiatives

I am not sure that we are by nature a family church as in small children and parents.... If we are to decide to develop family work, we need weekly events like Messy Church or Mums and Toddlers events to encourage people in the parish to come to them.

Growing, especially Junior church

Pleased to see the Sunday school restarting

Do more to welcome new people

People suggest we could develop ways to welcome new people by greeting them in a professional way or following up with them

We have a number of people who attend once or twice and then disappear. This includes some of our younger people, and a quick response to a first visit to church and follow up when absence happens can be important.

I propose that those among us who are identified as welcomers, or volunteer for the work, should receive professional training from people who know how this situation can best be handled.

More socially-facing or charitable work

Suggestions that it would be good to do more in this space. Either by supporting existing organisations, or through outreach of our own

Build connections to Carecent and/or the Salvation Army in York, supporting them in their outreach work to the poor and marginalised.

A more outwardly-facing, socially-concerned ministry.

Reaching out to the community

Verbatim feedback – other suggestions

More focus on young people

Encouragement to children and young people

More space for theology and reflection

More evening courses (e.g. the Lent courses (but not just during Lent), voices from the Pews etc.)/house groups

Focus on pastoral work

The parish needs its pastoral care to be given greater priority, though recognising how difficult that is with the clergy spread so thinly across all the parishes.

Collaborate more with YCCG

Revival of the Community of the Cross of Nails

Hopes for short vacancy

Short interregnum

More accessible seating

Get rid of uncomfortable pews and have moveable seats for more flexible worship