



THE
WORD
WHO
IS
LIFE

The Pastoral Plan:

The Call to Mission

An Abridged Version

2024



To read the Pastoral Plan in detail visit:
www.abdiocese.org.uk/diocese/pastoral-plan

THE WORD WHO IS LIFE - THE CALL TO MISSION

Pastoral Plan III: Making our Church of today everyone's Church for the future

Dear brothers and sisters,

Christ Jesus calls us to mission in exciting and also challenging times for the Church. Christian values are not as embedded in society as was once the case. However, we are in the midst of a renewal – not an era of change, but a change of era.

As society becomes more secular, our parish communities must be ever-clearer beacons of light, guiding people to Christ. We are in a new era of apostolic mission, where we respond zealously to the call on our lives to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19)

I would like to re-iterate my vision for the Diocese:

“ I therefore take this opportunity to invite everyone in the Diocese – lay faithful and religious, deacons and priests – to join with me in forging our parishes into communities of saints, into strong, lively and welcoming schools of discipleship. May they be communities where the Lord is known and loved; where the liturgy is experienced as an encounter with the wonder of heaven; where daily prayer is a natural part of life; communities of healing, where all are welcomed, their dignity as children of God always recognised; where young people grow in deep love for the Gospel, for the sacramental life of the Church and for prayer; where all know the riches of the Faith and seek to share it with others.

All we do must be grounded in prayer, in an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus and with a growing understanding of our faith, that we may be effective in mission. We are called to be ever-more closely conformed to Christ, that as His disciples we may bring the Good News to our brothers and sisters.

This call is for all of us, for it is given to us at baptism.

The celebration of the Eucharist must always be at the heart of our lives, the encounter with Christ that enables us to do all He asks of us. This time of renewal across the Diocese is a call to us all to re-commit ourselves to the celebration of the Eucharist.

While the sense of community is important, it must be recognised that the shape of our communities will change in the future, as priests serve larger numbers of people, in wider areas than has been the case in the past.

Our Diocese is blessed with wonderful schools and, as key places of prayer, formation and mission, it will always be necessary for our schools to have very close relationships with the parish communities of which they are a part.

The mission given us by the Lord calls us to move to new ways of doing things. This mission must be the measure of all we do, and it requires us to look outward, in the work of evangelisation.





Every person has a part to play in this mission.

The principal role of the priest is the preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and the pastoral care of the people placed in his charge. We must enable the priests of the Diocese to be free to carry out these prime responsibilities of their vocation.

The many employees and volunteers in our parish communities play an important part in the mission, and the future will see the development of existing and new roles.

During the coming eighteen months we shall take the steps necessary for the groups of churches that currently form eleven deaneries, to become eleven parishes.

This is a radical step, but it will give us the flexibility to respond to current challenges in a way that is resilient, sustainable and adaptable. Change is never easy. There can be sadness along the way, but we shall find new life in our response to the call of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Such a parish will truly become a 'community of communities.'¹ It is inevitable that there will be some church buildings that will cease to have Mass every Sunday, or even on any Sunday. In such cases – and provided that the local community can sustain the financial responsibility for the church building – support will be given to the local community to use these church buildings for the mission of the Church, even though the community will attend Sunday Mass elsewhere.

The team of priests living across this wider community will be able to cooperate more closely, serving the sacramental needs of the communities concerned in a flexible way - and be freed to bring their gifts to the service of the Church in mission.

The role of Dean will be replaced with a priest who serves as Moderator. We already have experience of 'moderated teams' of priests, but for many this will be a new direction for parish ministry. We are moving to a time when, as never before, lay faithful, deacons, religious and priests – are all working together for the building up of the Kingdom.



1. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n.28.



I have appointed Canon Kieron O'Brien as Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Planning, to assist me with the implementation of the Pastoral Plan. Deacon Nick St John, who has much experience in change management, has been appointed to assist us in all the important steps that lie ahead. The Formation Team, the Ongoing Clergy Formation Team, The Education Service, Communications, and Finance Teams will support this work.

Each community will continue to have its identity, but as all the communities begin to work together, each exercising their particular gifts, the whole will become greater than the sum of its parts. "There are many members, yet one body."² Each part is necessary and valued.

The world in which we live thirsts for God and every person, as God's creation, finds meaning and fulfilment only in Him. As St Augustine reminds us: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."³ This restlessness, this thirst, is often not recognised and results in much searching that reaches no fulfilment. It is into this space that the Church must step, answering "the need to respond adequately to many people's thirst for God."⁴

-
2. 1 Cor. 12:20.
 3. St Augustine, Confessions, 1.1
 4. Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, n.89.

SOME REFLECTIONS TO HELP WITH THE NEXT STEPS:

What does this mean for me?

As communities begin to work together, sharing their gifts and talents, you will see changes taking place. Here are some of the things you might notice, or help bring to fruition:

- We are blessed with wonderful clergy who work hard to fulfil their principal role which is preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments, and the pastoral care of the people placed in their charge. A degree of centralised administration - involved in supporting mission - will free the clergy team for the ministry to which they have been called. Pray for them as they adapt to this new way of working.
- Our highest purpose is the worship of God. New structures will facilitate opportunities for prayer and worship, for retreats and pilgrimages. Our continuing welcome to all who come to our churches will help them encounter Christ and His overwhelming love for them.
- Learning more about our faith is so important; the more we know about God the more we love Him, and the closer our relationship with Him. The new model will enable more creative and adaptable ways of engaging in lifelong formation. Along with more opportunities for gathering together for formation, there will be online options for those who struggle to access childcare or find it difficult to leave their homes.
- Catholic Social Teaching is one of our greatest treasures and by working together collaboratively our witness will be transformative. There are already examples of this way of working in parts of the Diocese. How could your community help bring new life to your locality?

I ask that every parish community provides times of Eucharistic Adoration, that we may all join in prayer for all that lies ahead. Such times of prayer will bring graces and blessings to us all.

I invite you to reflect on the gifts and talents with which the Lord has blessed you - as individuals, and as parish communities - and to consider how these might contribute towards this renewed vision of 'Making our Church of today, everyone's Church for the future'.

Give thanks to the Lord for all that He has given to you and your community and ask Him for guidance and courage if there are times that you feel anxious, angry, or overwhelmed by the steps that lie ahead. These are natural responses to change, and there will be opportunities to share your thoughts and feelings.

Let us pray for each other as members of the diocesan family, that as we work together, each and every one of us may be empowered to realise the fullness of our baptismal vocation. By our baptism we have been incorporated into the Body of Christ, called to live out our faith, proclaim the Gospel and participate in the mission of the Church. "For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building."⁵ Let us unite in this vision, that we continue to be beacons of light for a world so very much in need of Jesus' healing and mercy.

With every blessing,

+ Richard

5. 1 Cor. 3:9

THE FUTURE SHAPE OF OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITIES

The delivery of the Plan will begin with prayer and every parish is asked to provide times of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, for the specific intention of prayer for the Diocese. I would ask that monthly Holy Hours be held in each parish, taking us through to the Summer of 2025, when we shall celebrate together the 60th Anniversary of the Diocese.

Beginning in February 2024, steps towards change will begin in two deaneries at a time, in the following order:

February 2024	Cathedral and Guildford Deaneries
April 2024	Lewes & Mayfield and Crawley Deaneries
June 2024	Weybridge and Woking Deaneries
September 2024	Epsom and Redhill Deaneries
November 2024	Eastbourne & St. Leonards Deanery
January 2025	Worthing and Brighton & Hove Deaneries

The pattern for the delivery will begin with visits by the Formation and OGF Teams to the two Deaneries, facilitating times of reflection on gifts, strengths and challenges. This will lead to work on a plan, suited to each Deanery.

It will be during this stage that the Decree of Reconstitution as a Moderated Parish will be promulgated.

Implementation will take place at a pace suited to each Moderated Parish. This is a key element in this development and change for the Diocese, since development and mission is not time-limited event, but a way of life for every community.

LORD,
THE WORD WHO IS LIFE.

May all the people of our Diocese
grow in openness
to the power of the Holy Spirit,
so that through a growth in
understanding and courage,
and truly open to your call,
we may bear powerful witness
to all around us,
for you are Lord for ever and ever,

AMEN



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

www.abdiocese.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 252878