



Working Together To Evangelise Our Diocese

Summer 2017



Introduction

To Proclaim the Good News of
Jesus Christ in Essex and East London

Introduction

DIOCESAN CENTENARY PRAYER

Almighty and merciful Father,
bestow your grace upon the Diocese of Brentwood
as we celebrate our Centenary Year.

We give thanks for the witness of past generations
and pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit
that we may be ever more faithful to proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.
Bless Alan, our Bishop, the Clergy, Religious and Faithful of our Diocese,
and graciously grant plentiful vocations to the Priesthood,
the Consecrated Life and the Sacrament of Marriage.
Strengthen us in the communion of faith, hope and charity,
united in prayer with our Holy Father the Pope and the Universal Church.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.

Saints Erconwald, Cedd and Edmund of Canterbury, pray for us.

Introduction

FOREWORD



The important thing is not to walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.

As I write this foreword I have just returned from the diocesan pilgrimages to Walsingham and Lourdes. At Walsingham, together with over 3,000 pilgrims, I entrusted the future of the diocese to the care of Mary the Mother of Jesus.

On the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes earlier this year, I wrote of the need to respond to the needs of a quickly changing world – our parishes, schools and all our communities will need to face this challenge. Last week, in our biggest ever pilgrimage to Lourdes, I glimpsed an image of the Church as it could be – young and old united together in prayer, charity and joy.

The Stewards of the Gospel initiative has already borne much fruit in many of our parishes. There have already been many conversations and wide consultation.

I am grateful for the continued energy and faith of our Stewards and their helpers.

In my Pastoral Letter earlier this year I wrote that it is clear to me that we now need to make important choices for our own diocese. Pope Saint John Paul II almost 30 years ago urged dioceses to embrace “Collaboration, dialogue, discernment... and consultation of the lay faithful, women and men.” Pope Francis takes up this challenge and points to a way forward, “A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will prove illusory... The important thing is not to walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.”



The Rt Rev Alan Williams

In the not too distant future it will fall to me, as your Bishop, to make many difficult decisions, but with your help and prayers and with confidence in Christ and Mary I am sure that we can find a way to build on the strong foundations of the last 100 years to ensure that we can work together to evangelise our diocese and care for one another through the second century.

Within this Draft Working Plan for a possible way forward there are two distinct elements. The first is Renewal and the second is Restructuring. They are interconnected and interdependent. We must do them both as well as we can as we strive to meet our objectives and our Vision. We have enough time to move gently towards our new human response to God's love for us but we must move with purpose.

I urge everyone to read all of this document carefully and to pray about it before discussing it in your parishes. I look forward to hearing your feedback to the questions raised at the end.

Yours in Christ and Mary

Bishop Alan Williams SM

Introduction

THE DRAFT WORKING PLAN

Our Vision

“Proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in Essex and East London”

The Church in Essex and East London working better and differently together to evangelise our diocese; it is a vision of the people of God here and now collaborating to use our various Grace-given gifts to evangelise our diocese to the best of our combined ability with the help of God

Our Objectives

Maximise the opportunities for evangelisation

Maximise sacramental provision

Maximise the opportunities for putting faith into action through charitable works

Our Strategy

Renewal and Restructuring

Implementation

The steps needed to achieve those objectives:

A 12-Strand Plan for Renewal

A Framework of Proposals for Restructuring

THE VISION FOR OUR DIOCESE

Having prayed and having listened to the discussions at the meetings of the Stewards of the Gospel (including the last two which brought together our Clergy and the Stewards of the Gospel), and having taken on board all that has been written in the Responses to the Questionnaires and the feedback from the Stewards since then, we wanted to share with you the Vision we have for our diocese and the way that we hope and pray that together we can bring that Vision into being.

OUR VISION is of a diocese working together with joy to evangelise our diocese (Evangelii Gaudium), recognising the Church's deepest nature (Deus Caritas Est) and relying on a productive dialogue between priests and people (Lumen Gentium).

When we consider the Centenary Prayer at the start of this document we see much of this Vision reflected back to us. It also sits consistently with all that we have been praying for in our Steward of the Gospel prayer at the end of this document.

It is a vision that builds on themes given to us by the Holy Father and his predecessors and picked up by Bishop Alan in his invitation for us all to join him in this discernment process. It is a Vision that we hope will contain much to pray about and to think about for everyone across our diocese.

Deus Caritas Est

In 2005 Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI began his papacy by telling us all:

I wish in my first Encyclical to speak of the love which God lavishes upon us and which we in turn must share with others.

I wish to emphasise some basic elements, so as to call forth in the world renewed energy and commitment in the human response to God's love.

This human response is at the heart of how we go about spreading the Gospel message within our communities across Essex and East London, and he went on to point out what he describes as two essential facts:

Introduction

- a) *The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her threefold responsibility of: proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.*
- b) *The Church is God's family in the world. In this family no one ought to go without the necessities of life. Yet at the same time caritas-agape extends beyond the frontiers of the Church. The parable of the Good Samaritan remains as a standard which imposes universal love towards the needy whom we encounter "by chance" (cf. Lk 10:31), whoever they may be...*

If, together, we can fulfil each of these inseparable and presupposed duties to the best of our combined abilities, then we will go a very long way to bringing the Gospel message to our diocese both inside and outside our church buildings.

If, together, we can truly be God's family in Essex and East London then we can evangelise our diocese, strengthened by the sacraments and the word of God and by exercising the ministry of charity.

Lumen Gentium

In his Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Pope Paul VI reminded us that every member of our church from the Pope to Laity has a very important role to play in our church. The Church is Christ's body on Earth and each of us has our own vital part to play. Each of us is a vital part of the body of Christ in our diocese. Each part of the body needs to be in communication with the others and, as Bishop Alan has reminded us in the early stages of this process, a rich dialogue between priests and people will bear fruit in our combined efforts to evangelise our diocese.

Evangelii Gaudium

Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation to us is writ through with JOY. In it he wishes:

to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelisation marked by this joy.

He speaks to us about the need for renewal and about how God constantly renews us, how the love of Christ urges us on and how the Holy Spirit animates us. He tells us that he dreams of a missionary impulse in our church so that we can go out into our community with joy to spread the Gospel message.

Responses

Back in February we said that we would start by reading and listening to everything that parishes wanted to say in their Responses to the Questionnaire. That has been done.

Having read the Responses to the Questionnaires several things are apparent and relevant for the future of this process. There are many ideas that can help us as we work to renew and restructure ourselves.

- a) Parishes have set themselves excellent agendas for their future evangelisation in their locality. This will be a part of your renewal.
- b) Everyone says that we need to do more for and with the young people in our diocese but there are few ideas to take forward.
- c) People want better Adult Formation. They want a renewal of their faith and their relationship with Christ.
- d) There are several areas of significant building development around our diocese and they afford an opportunity for evangelisation.
- e) People seem to want to serve the Church (or get other lay people to do it) and they want to be trained to do so. There is a keen sense that relationships between lay people and clergy should change in the future and that the expectations of what a priest can reasonably be expected to do needs to be considered by all.
- f) Our congregations are ageing and we are losing young people. This is a trend that is not sustainable. However, older people are living longer so that helps and gives us time to do something about it.
- g) School links with primary schools come across as overall very good but the level of co-operation and collaborative working between parishes and secondary schools is less good and therefore represents an opportunity for more evangelisation in the future.
- h) Declining percentages of catholic teachers is evident. The ethos of catholic schools, while not totally dependent on catholic teachers, will become watered down if we do not address this.
- i) Nearly everyone wants their own parish to remain substantially unchanged.
- j) Many people want “certainty” about their future. No one seems to like the “uncertainty” we currently have.
- k) There is a recognition of a need to restructure parishes and/or parish life but it is clear that people are still reticent and uncertain as to how this might proceed. Ideas about how people would like to merge, link or co-operate are not yet properly formed and sensible decisions for the future shape of our diocese and its parishioners are yet to be made.

Introduction

Within your Responses to the Questionnaire there is a recognition of a need to change, a sense that we must embark on the next stage of our journey together without relying on the fact that we have always done things in a particular way in the past. There are many fantastic ideas for how each individual parish can do new things, but this is constrained by the quite natural desire to keep our parish lives much the same. This is a tension for us all to pray about and it is a tension that we are gradually coming to terms with. The time has come to think beyond our comfort zones, beyond what we have always done and to see if our human response to God's love can lead us to new and joyful ways to evangelise our diocese.

In addition to the findings from the Responses we have taken account of the following facts:

- i. Our Catholic Church is a sacramental church. We are striving to be a more evangelising sacramental church and we are striving to be as good as we possibly can at providing pastoral care for each other and putting our faith into action through charitable works. The sacramental nature of our church is key to both Renewal and Restructuring.
- ii. We have a large diocese with a catholic population estimated at 250,000 spread over a large geographic area. On any given week about one in five of those people attends one of our churches. To state the obvious, that means that on any given week four out of five are not.
- iii. When we consider how we might Renew ourselves and how we might Restructure ourselves, we must take into account that we are a diverse diocese and what works in densely populated urban and in less densely populated rural areas will differ quite considerably.
- iv. By 2035 we estimate that we will have 52 priests who are going to be based in 33 locations. By 2025 (in only eight years) we will have 76 able to be in 57 locations.

OUR VISION is of a diocese working together with joy to evangelise our diocese, recognising the Church's deepest nature and relying on the productive dialogue between priests and people.

It is a vision that operates across different time frames and recognises that we are on a journey together and that the journey has no end. It has stages on the way but if we are to be constantly renewed, animated and urged on we will always be developing and doing things differently in the future. We will still be recognising the deepest nature of our Church but we will constantly be giving new expression to it in each generation.

To make it more accessible we have divided the future into time frames that are easier for us to grasp. We would describe these time frames as:

- 1) Short term: now to 2019.
- 2) Medium term: 2020 to 2025.
- 3) Long term: 2025 to 2035.

Each of those time frames will represent a different stage of our journey, but even 2035 does not represent the end of our journey.

Working Together to Evangelise Our Diocese should never stop. The rich dialogue between different parts of the body of Christ should never stop. If we keep working together then it is our hope and prayer that we will continually find new ways to evangelise our diocese.

In this way we can be the missionary impulse that Pope Francis dreams of; we can walk together relying on each other in a wise pastoral discernment that will bear fruit across the decades.

Objectives

In order to attain our Vision, we shall need to work together to achieve three objectives:

- 1) Maximise the opportunities to evangelise our diocese.
- 2) Maximise sacramental provision.
- 3) Maximise the opportunities for putting faith into action through charitable works.

Strategy

Our strategy to achieve our objectives will be:

- A) The Renewal of Our Diocese.
- B) The Restructuring of Our Diocese.

These are separate but interdependent and interconnected. When combined they represent a strategy to take us forward between now and 2035. Neither one is sufficient on its own and we must work together to achieve both.

If we are to evangelise our diocese to the best of our ability and with the help of God, we must work together to Renew and Restructure ourselves.

We set out below how we intend to approach each of these objectives and at the end we will ask for your thoughts on them.



Renewal

12-Strand Plan for the
Renewal of Our Diocese

Renewal

Renewal is a mixture of the Spiritual and the Practical. Each of the following points is a strand of work that we will need to develop together. In looking to the future we recognise the very important role of digital and social media, and emerging technologies. Consideration of this shapes every aspect of our planning.

1 Formation: We need to focus on deepening, broadening and strengthening the faith of people in our diocese. Developing people's relationship with Christ must be top of the list. From this so much else will flow. Many people in the diocese have asked about resources to assist and, although we can do much more in time, it is worth parishes taking time to explore the many resources that are publicly available on the Proclaim 15 site.

📌 tinyurl.com/dioceseformation

There are many topics covered to facilitate discussion and action, including a very good one on Prayer!

2 Leaders: What type of leaders (Clergy and Laity) do we think are necessary in the future? How will we ensure that these new Lay Leaders and Clergy Leaders will work well together? This strand will be developed after we receive the feedback to the recent questions raised in the Preliminary Observations.

3 Money: Analyse what we have, understand our finances and determine future needs and aspirations. It is clear from the Responses that many parishioners understandably have limited understanding of how their parish finances work and even less understanding about diocesan finances. Money is an important resource that is available to help us to evangelise our diocese and we will need greater understanding if we are to make the best use of this resource.

Renewal

4 Property: Analyse what we have, understand different types of properties, the different possibilities and challenges associated with each type and determine our future needs and aspirations. How are our properties helping us to achieve our Vision today and could they be used better in the future? Property is an important resource that is available to help us to evangelise our diocese and we will need greater understanding if we are to make the best use of this resource.

5 Priests and People: A strand of work aimed at assisting our priests and lay people. The new reality will be that they will each be working differently and they will be working together in a new relationship. If we are to love one another we must care for each other through this process.

6 Stewardship: Our understanding of the relationship between our faith, our money and our property is limited and can be improved in order to attain our Vision. Bishop Alan has already begun to work on this strand of work. Stewardship goes beyond mere money or property and includes our relationship with God and how we see ourselves.

7 Schools: The Episcopal Vicar for Education and the Director of Education are already working with schools. There is now a new vision for education in our diocese. This will need to be understood and shared in the coming months and parishes are urged to read:

➤ tinyurl.com/dioceseschools

8 Work with and for Young People: The Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Formation already has a flow of work that includes this. It has already been shared at the meeting on 24 June 2017 and this will be continued and developed.

9 Caritas: Focus on improving our work associated with Charity or “Caritas” in accordance with Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s Motu Proprio “On the Service of Charity”.

↑ tinyurl.com/diocesecaritas

This is one of the essential elements of our church life (see Deus Caritas Est). It may well assist with our work with and for young people and it will help us to take our faith out of our church buildings and into the wider society.

10 Vocations: The Director of Vocations has an existing stream of work but every strand of our activity and our prayer should be focused on engendering vocations of every kind (priests, deacons, religious, married life, teaching, caring and lay leadership). A new Vocations website is about to be launched.

11 Liturgy: Proclaiming the Gospel and Celebrating the Sacraments require a rich liturgy. Our worship is vital to the success of everything else. We can develop new liturgies to take us through the short and medium term as new structures are created and as we bring others to an end. Support to enable lay people takes a more significant role in liturgical preparation and the conduct of liturgies.

12 Integration: Several Responses to the Questionnaire raised questions about how well we are integrating our various traditions. We will undertake a strand of work together to enhance Gospel values in this aspect of our work.

In the coming months and years we will significantly develop each Strand of Renewal so that together we can maximise opportunities to evangelise our diocese.



Restructuring

A Four Part Framework for
Restructuring our Diocese

Restructuring

Parishes are invited to consider how you think you can best provide the provision of sacraments and pastoral care as well as how best to evangelise in your location within the restructuring framework we have set out in the next part. How would you like your community to look in the future? Would you like to have hubs around a central church/parish serving all the existing parish churches or would you like to merge and form a new large parish or have priests roaming from one existing parish to another or would you like to suggest something completely different? How do you think your part of our diocese can best be evangelised, provide sacraments and provide pastoral care?

This Framework does not lead to any one solution in any particular location and it is perfectly possible that different solutions might be appropriate in different locations.

Restructuring Framework:

A The best information that we have tells us to expect 52 priests based in 33 locations in 2035 (and please remember that is only 18 years from now). We think that it makes sense to plan with that in mind. That does not mean that today we should aim to determine exactly where each of those 52 priests will be in 18 years, but it should be a factor in our current and medium-term decision making.

B We promised that we would take what you said as a key part of our decision making and three very clear messages are to cater for young people, improve adult formation and give training to enable people to serve their Church. Training and Adult Formation can be organised across our diocese quite independently of other things and how and where it is done can be very flexible, but catering for young people seems to have a very clear geographical link with our schools. We would want any future Restructuring to bolster the links between schools, clergy and parishioners.

C We are a sacramental church. Five of the seven sacraments are not particularly connected with any geography other than where a person lives but two of them have quite strong geographic ties with institutions.

- Confirmation has a close relationship with teenagers and they are most concentrated in secondary schools.
- Anointing the sick can take place anywhere but there is a concentration of need around hospitals.

We would want any future Restructuring to ensure that our outreach to those in hospital and in secondary school can be as good as possible. This is an area where we can serve the people of our diocese in a very special way and evangelise at the same time.

Restructuring

FOUR-PART FRAMEWORK FOR THE RESTRUCTURING OF OUR DIOCESE

FRAMEWORK: FIRST PART

We are a sacramental church and two sacraments have geographical/institutional links. If we map out the locations of our catholic secondary schools and the larger hospitals, we see a close correlation. This is not surprising because of concentrations of population.

There are 14 locations where 18 secondary schools can be found close to major hospitals.

A “location” is NOT a particular parish.

- 1) Colchester: St Benedict’s College and Colchester General Hospital.
- 2) Chelmsford (x2 schools): St John Payne Catholic School, New Hall Independent School and Broomfield Hospital.
- 3) Southend (x2 schools): St Bernard’s High School, St Thomas More High School and Southend Hospital.
- 4) Basildon: De La Salle School and Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals.
- 5) Grays: Grays Convent High School for Girls and Orsett Hospital (Basildon and Thurrock UH).
- 6) Dagenham: All Saints Catholic School (no large hospital).
- 7) Forest Gate (x2 schools): St Bonaventure’s Comprehensive School, St Angela’s Ursuline Convent School and Newham University Hospital.
- 8) Walthamstow: Holy Family Catholic College and Whipps Cross University Hospital.
- 9) Woodford Green: Trinity Catholic High School (no large hospital).
- 10) Harlow: St Mark’s West Essex Catholic School and Princess Alexandra Hospital.
- 11) Brentwood: Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School (no large hospital).
- 12) Romford: The Champion School and Queens Hospital.
- 13) Upminster: Sacred Heart of Mary Girls’ School (no large hospital).
- 14) Ilford (x2 schools): The Palmer Academy, Ursuline Academy Ilford and King George Hospital, Goodmayes.

Thus, out of 18 secondary schools only four are not in close proximity to a large local hospital. Furthermore, the 18 schools are spread among 14 different urban locations of high population density.



Restructuring

Of the four locations where there is a secondary school but no large hospital:

- Brentwood is the Cathedral Church of our diocese.
- Woodford Green is one of the largest congregations in the diocese and close to Whipps Cross Hospital.
- Upminster is also a large parish and close to Romford Hospital.
- Dagenham has two very large congregations in the town and is close to three hospitals.

First Framework Proposal

In order to reflect the expressed need to focus on young people and to provide the sacraments in places where the need is concentrated, it is proposed that we should ring fence provision of clergy in these 14 locations before making any other decisions. These locations will be strong bases from which we will build in the future. For this reason, each of these “locations” would work out of one or two churches in the vicinity. Neither of those churches is yet determined. That is for local conversations in the first instance. Where there is a religious order in situ, their parish might well be one of the two parishes and that will need consideration.

- i. In the medium term (2025) 13 of those 14 locations should have three priests in them operating out of two churches and Upminster should have two priests from two churches. Total priests allocated under this First Framework Proposal: 41 (out of an estimated 76 priests, i.e. 54% of the total number).
- ii. In the long term (2035) that will reduce to 25 priests in those locations, i.e. the 11 with a hospital/cathedral will have two and all three without a directly related hospital or Cathedral will only have one. (Total priests allocated under this First Framework Proposal: 25 out of an estimated 52, i.e. 48% of the total number.)

FRAMEWORK: SECOND PART

Given that 14 locations are set in the First Part we then looked at the map to see where there is no cover provided by those locations.

Of these 14 locations, seven are inside the M25 and seven are outside it, but Grays and Brentwood are only just outside the M25. Thus, things are heavily weighted towards the South West of our diocese and the map looks to have sparse coverage in the North and East. This in turn reflects the very large congregations and the dense population that we have inside the M25.

We need to ensure that we have coverage and therefore access to the sacraments right across Essex and East London. If one looks simply at figures for Mass attendance or catholic population some places would just not feature and there would be no provision for the sacraments in some places. For this reason, we propose that the coverage should try to ensure that geographic coverage as well as population density should be taken into consideration.

Second Framework Proposal

In order to reflect this need, it is proposed that eight priests are reserved (in the medium term – 2025) to cover the following areas:

- a) The North West of our Diocese
– Three priests to cover the area from Braintree to the north and west of Braintree.
- b) East of Colchester – Two priests to cover the Tendring Peninsular (note: this is in addition to the priests in the Colchester location referred to in the First Framework Proposal).
- c) Dengie Peninsula and in as far as Billericay – Two priests.
- d) Rural Mid Essex/“Ongar/Epping area” – One priest.

2025: Total priests allocated under this Second Framework Proposal: eight (out of an estimated 76 priests, i.e. 11% of the total number).

In the long term (2035) these eight priests will need to reduce to six priests.

Total priests allocated under this Second Framework Proposal: six (out of an estimated 76 priests, i.e. 8% of the total number).

FRAMEWORK: THIRD PART

If one adds the priests referred to in the First and Second Framework Proposals, there are 49 allocated in 2025 and 31 in 2035.

The remaining 27 priests (2025) and 21 priests (2035) would then be based in other locations where there are large existing congregations, noting that some are home to Religious Orders where more than one priest will necessarily be resident.

Third Framework Proposal

In the medium term (2025), 27 priests should be based in 21 high mass attendance locations. After taking the 36 locations from the first and second framework proposals, the remaining 21 locations for priests should be in close proximity to the largest existing mass attendance parishes. Thus, it is possible that a church with a high mass attendance could be in an area where the local worshipping communities think that another local church is the better base from which to grow in the long term or it may be that local communities could see a way forward that did not involve any of the existing churches but rather a new church on a new site. These 21 locations will have a total of 27 priests resident.

Restructuring

Total priests allocated under this Third Framework Proposal: 27 (out of an estimated 76 priests, i.e. 36% of the total number).

In the long term these 21 locations with 27 priests will need to be reduced to 13 locations with 21 priests.

Total priests allocated under this Third Framework Proposal: 21 (out of an estimated 52 priests, i.e. 40% of the total number).

FRAMEWORK: FOURTH PART

There is a frequently expressed desire for certainty among the parish Responses. We feel that although this might be unpalatable at first, we need to create a degree of certainty that will enable parish communities to consider their future in the context of the Framework set out and it will enable us to start to work with parishes knowing where we and they are ultimately ending up. We can work with the various contexts that different places find themselves in to ensure that every person in our diocese is properly loved and cared for in new ways.

Fourth Framework Proposal

Once we have determined the locations and priest numbers we are working towards between now and 2025 and then 2035, these will be borne in mind and we can begin gently moving people into place for the medium and long term.

The stated aim would be to keep a priest in these places and once locations are decided there must be an understanding that if a priest in one of the locations listed is no longer in place that a parish that is not listed WILL (not MAY) lose its priest in order to move him into the listed place. It is important to manage the situation proactively. This would be done according to the discretion of the Bishop and not according to any formula or fixed set of criteria. It would also be done with love and care for all.

We will make a firm commitment to keep those listed locations with a priest at all times during the process.

Restructuring and Renewal

It is very important to note that:

- a) Within the Framework set out above we invite people to be creative with ideas. The Framework does not necessarily lead to one outcome rather than another. We want people to think how their church might look in their locality. Be bold, be creative and let us know your ideas before we begin to make proposals for individual locations.
- b) Renewal and Restructuring are separate, interdependent and interconnected objectives. All 12 Strands of the Renewal Plan will come together to support everyone across the diocese. As these strands of work combine we will discern new ways of doing things with resources that we have not yet released. How that will look in practice will depend to some extent on how we decide to Restructure.
- c) This will take place over a period of 17 or 18 years. This time frame gives us a degree of flexibility with regard to placing priests in the places that together we have decided should be our new bases for future growth.
- d) Together we will provide love and support to communities so that no one walks alone and everyone cares for our neighbours.
- e) This plan will almost certainly be superseded by events. It will be constantly monitored and flexed as we go along. Events may be favourable. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that we could get a new religious order in the diocese or our prayers may lead to more vocations that will boost numbers in the long term (even new vocations today will not boost medium-term numbers). Events may be unfavourable. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that our diocese could lose the service of an existing religious order or that we lose more of our existing priests than forecast. We cannot plan relying on such events but we can flex our plan as they occur.
- f) The combined objectives of Renewal and Restructuring should provide us with a base for future growth through evangelisation. We hope and pray that our efforts to evangelise our diocese in this way will bring more people to Christ, more vocations and more lay people working in new ways to build the Kingdom of God in East London and Essex.



Summary

Feedback From Your Parish

Summary

This Strategy for attaining our Vision by achieving the twin objectives of maximising evangelisation and sacramental provision through Renewal and Restructuring is offered to parishes for prayer, consideration and feedback.

We would ask you to try to think and pray about our Church as a whole as well as your own parish and feedback to us your thoughts on the following questions:

A) Do you agree that striving for Renewal and Restructuring is a good way to pursue our Vision?

YES / NO

If Yes: are there points of detail you would like to comment upon?

If No: please set out brief reasons.

B) Are you satisfied that the 12-Point Plan for Renewal covers the right strands of work?

YES / NO

If Yes: are there points of detail you would like to comment upon?

If No: please set out brief reasons.

C) Are you satisfied that the Framework provides a good model for us to Restructure our Diocese?

YES / NO

If Yes: are there points of detail you would like to comment upon?

If No: please set out brief reasons.

We would be grateful for your answers to these questions by 30 September 2017 and certainly no later than 21 October 2017. It is our hope and intention to take your responses to these questions and then to put forward a First Formal Proposal for the Renewal and Restructuring of Our Diocese in November 2017.

Thank you for reading this document, for praying on the content and for your comments. We will take all of them into account as we work to discern the right way to achieve our Vision.

Bishop Alan SM

Steven Webb

Director of Development

Fr Chris Brooks (Chair)

on behalf of the members of the
Diocesan Strategic Planning Group
July 2017

Summary

STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL PRAYER

Merciful Father, author of creation,
your Spirit enriches our world.

Through your Son, who shares our humanity,
you have called us to participate in your divine creativity
and to build the kingdom of God here on earth.

Form us, we pray, as one community
under the leadership of our Bishop Alan,
to serve the people of our Diocese of Brentwood.

Inspire us to discover new ways
to spread the joy of the Gospel.

Open our eyes to see Christ in others,
especially the poor, the sick and the marginalised.

Empower us to be the hands and feet of Christ
in our parishes and communities.

Help us to welcome all into His embrace.

Guide us in our discernment.

Give wisdom to our Stewards of the Gospel
who will help us in each parish
to see new paths of possibility:

for a spirit of mission that invigorates our every effort;
and for the strength to be unafraid of what is new.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.



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