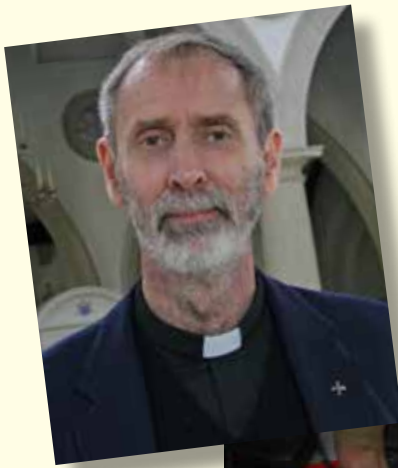


# STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL

Application form



# Stewards of the Gospel - Sharing Stories

In the reading for the first Sunday of Lent, Moses addressed the people, “My father was a wandering Aramaean...” These words became a formula that the people regularly recited in the temple, a shared story; and perhaps the oldest part of the Old Testament. It tells how the Lord accompanied his people on a journey and was always with them through change and challenge until he brought them to a new land.

This theme of the closeness of God is taken up in the second reading. “The word is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart.”

Discerning together the future of our diocese involves story telling and listening. We need to listen to each other’s stories of how God has worked in our lives; and is still accompanying us. In sharing our stories we then begin to write together a new narrative.

Moses’ words united the people. He articulated what they all held in common, - Faith in God who had always been with them. Jesus, too, filled with the Holy Spirit, was led on a journey by the Spirit, through trials and temptations but he, like Moses, knew that God was with him.

Next year, 2017, our diocese will mark its 100th anniversary. We have a shared story, which we will be retelling in various ways as part of the celebrations. And like the people of God who have gone before us, we can’t stay still! Society and the world around us has changed; we have changed. Ageing clergy, immigration which has altered the demographics of the Diocese and buildings in need of repair are just some of the forces for change which demand an urgent response. The Gospel story stays the same but where and how we re-tell it brings new and exciting challenges.

The Diocesan Strategic Planning Group was formed last year to begin to address this. The group is comprised of Bishop Alan Williams, Mgr Kevin Hale VG, Fr Andrew Headon, Fr Dominic Howarth, Fr Tom Saunders, Fr Stephen Myers, Mrs Mary Huntington, Mrs Anne-Marie Conway, Mr Jim Barron, Mrs Pat Barron, Mr Damian Walsh and Mr Tim Campbell.

Now we would like to appoint “Stewards of the Gospel”, one individual in each parish\*, who together with parishioners and local clergy, will listen to the people and then be part of the collaboration between clergy and laity in writing the next chapter of the story of the Diocese.

They will assess the resources available at local level in order to maximise opportunities for evangelisation and sacramental provision. The intention is that these individuals would volunteer their time and their talents to work closely with the clergy and parishes as part of the diocesan planning process. Comprehensive training and support will be made available to the Stewards in order to prepare them for their important role in their parishes. And it will not be an easy one. After the discernment stage of the process, the role will involve accompanying people through change and transition, helping to implement the chosen initiatives and make them a reality.

\* In the case of linked parishes, more than one Steward will be appointed

# “Stewards of the Gospel”

## What are “Stewards of the Gospel”?

The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Diocesan Strategic Planning Group (DSPG) is a small group of clergy and laity who were invited by Bishop Alan in spring 2015 to consider, at a strategic level, the resources available to the Diocese and its impact upon evangelisation in the years ahead.

Building on this approach, the DSPG would like now to encourage the appointment of “Stewards of the Gospel”, an individual in each parish, who together with parishioners and local clergy, will assess the resources available at the local level to maximise opportunities for evangelisation and sacramental provision. The Stewards would volunteer their time and their talents to work closely with the clergy, parishes and schools as part of the diocesan planning process. Comprehensive training and support will be provided to help the Stewards prepare for their important role in their parishes.

Ideally a “Steward” will be appointed in each parish. He or she will encourage discussion and be an advocate for their fellow parishioners, communicating their ideas, thoughts and concerns to the DSPG.

It is hoped that an additional individual will be selected in each parish to offer support to the Steward and Parish Priest.

## Why is the role important?

The Stewards will be part of the collaboration between clergy and laity in shaping the future of the Diocese.

This is an exciting opportunity to play a key role within the Diocese - planning, preparing the Church for the future and ensuring evangelisation, ministry and sacramental provision for years to come.

## What will it involve?

Stewards will:

- Form a parish consultation group with the support of the Parish Priest
- Assess the resources of the parish in association with the consultation group and clergy
- Liaise with the DSPG on the outcomes of the parish group meetings
- Communicate regularly with the Parish Priest
- Attend (initially six) meetings with other Diocesan Stewards for formation and training
- Attend regular meetings with fellow deanery Stewards and the Clergy Deanery Conference

What is the time commitment?

- The appointment will last for two years in the first instance
- A regular (monthly) meeting with your Parish Priest
- Six formation meetings held monthly on a Saturday in Brentwood (10 am - 4 pm)
- From September 2016, monthly meetings in your parish
- From 2017, regular meetings with neighbouring Stewards; then monthly meetings of combined local parish consultation groups

## Who should volunteer?

### Faith criteria

- Practising Catholics
- Known to the Parish Priest and having his confidence
- Known to the parish as someone who is trusted and respected
- Has a good understanding of parish life and of priestly ministry

### Personal criteria

- Acts as a positive role model – resourceful, energetic and enthusiastic about the initiative
- Works effectively with others, building and maintaining excellent working relationships
- Is a strong communicator with experience of networking and conflict resolution
- Approaches issues with a “can-do” attitude
- Has experience of working with a wide range of people
- Has the availability to attend meetings and “formation” sessions as required
- Has access to IT and the internet

### Knowledge criteria

- Good knowledge of the local area and the issues affecting it (other parishes in the deanery, schools, hospitals, prisons etc)
- Has previously produced and delivered presentations to large groups
- Has experience of facilitating team meetings
- Has successfully supported change agendas (in a work or voluntary setting)
- Recognises the issues associated with change and has worked to support individuals through it
- Good IT skills including MSWord & MExcel (or the equivalent), e-mail and social media

The DSPG is keen to hear from anyone within our Diocesan community who meets most or all of these criteria. It is intended that the group will be diverse, representing the uniqueness of Brentwood Diocese.

## How do I get involved?

- Please complete the enclosed application form and return it by hand to your Parish Priest

## What happens after that?

- You will receive a letter from Bishop Alan shortly after Easter notifying you whether you have been chosen as the Steward for your parish
- The first formation day will be on Saturday 21 May. Details of the day will be in the Bishop’s letter
- Subsequent dates for your diary are: Saturdays 18 June, 16 July, 17 September, 22 October and 26 November

# STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL

Application form



*Diocese of  
Brentwood*

Parish:

## 1. Personal details (please use block capitals)

Last Name:

First Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Home Telephone No.

Mobile Telephone No.

E-mail address:

## 2. Involvement in the life of the parish - Please give details of any ministries or activities

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

### 3. Skills, abilities and experience

Please use this section to demonstrate why you think you would be suitable by reference to the role description and person specification (and by giving examples and case studies). Please include all relevant information, whether obtained through formal employment or ministry/voluntary/leisure activities.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

### Declaration

**I agree that the Diocese of Brentwood can create and maintain computer and paper records of my personal data and that this will be processed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. I confirm that all the information given by me on this form is correct and accurate.**

Signed:

Date:

**\*\*\*Please detach this form, enclose in an envelope and hand to your Parish Priest\*\*\***

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.  
Help us to choose wise *Stewards of the Gospel*  
who will work 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.



