



Working Together To Evangelise Our Diocese

CONSOLIDATED NOTES ON DISCUSSION RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

From the meeting of Stewards and Clergy on 24th February 2018

How can we make it easier for people from different parishes to work together?

Sharing resources: e.g. where parishes are running similar courses.

Cell evangelisation – using home groups where parishioners can have meetings each week with input from the priest.

Social aspects – eat together – visit each other's parishes – welcome each other on such occasions.

Stewards of the Gospel process has begun good work – many parishes are talking and working with each other already as a result – keep momentum.

Re-design devotional practices – Family life focus as the prime evangelists.

Clear leadership – good communication in sharing the need for workers not talkers.

Listen to the needs of parishioners and different groups of parishioners and respond to them.

Is it preferable for a priest to spend time in a school governors' meeting or in the school being with children and young people?

Ideally both; is it possible to re-design the role of parish priest to give them extra time by delegating admin tasks that take up so much time?

It is much more important for him to spend time with the future generation of the Church.

It should be for each individual priest to decide.

The priest must have a visual presence in the school.

Priests must be present to all.

Priest should attend to both the spiritual and governance in a chaplain and governor role.



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How can lay people support the Catholic ethos of our primary schools?

Become governors.

Protecting the Catholic ethos is important.

Encourage young mothers to send their children to Catholic schools.

Live out the faith in the home.

Lead by example: attend Mass and promote altar serving.

Celebrating prayer and enjoying it.

Get our children more engaged with and in the Mass.

Sometimes focus the Mass on the children present.

Ensure faith values are not overpowered by British values.

Parents can volunteer in schools.

Using open evenings as an opportunity to speak to kids about Catholic ethos.

Push for Holy Days and notable times of the year to be respected and celebrated in schools.

More conversations between parents and teachers about the Catholic ethos of the school.

With a priest at the helm and lay people helping, what would a well-balanced parish team look like?

To be well structured perhaps a Parish Council, (or equivalent), Finance Committee, Legion of Mary, SVP, other groups that are already functioning in the parish could offer a representative to build a team to offer creative solutions to our own communities with their own set of unique problems.

To look to our fellow Catholic neighbours for support and shared resources.



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Parishioners could elect candidates to be part of a team that is representative of the parish and perhaps operate a rotation policy so that the role is constantly renewed.
To be accountable for decisions made under the guidance of the parish priest.

Need to be aware of caring for each other: priest for people and people for priest

Build a team of committed representatives from the parish dedicated to finding creative solutions.

Open days, workshops, surgeries that offer shared resources within a deanery or other parish grouping.

A group of informal, committed people, prepared to work hard in the parish for the Diocese.

A common goal to evangelise is required.

Team needs to be dedicated to Mission and to be open to change.

Get people with different skills and different ages.

A group with a strong Catholic voice and a strong presence of prayer.

Team should have an ability to teach in a broad sense, encourage and motivate.

Move away from voluntary work for parish to a vocation to work for the Church.

How can we change our culture from one of inward maintenance to outward mission and welcome?

Ensure we have someone welcoming parishioners to Mass on a Sunday.

Do not have to be a priest or nun to be a missionary.
Priests should encourage people to be missionary in outlook.

Lay people to be enabled and empowered to spread the Gospel.

Helping to make people feel united.

Focus on getting lapsed Catholics back to the Church.



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Spend more energy on attracting new members.

Arrange talks to discuss Catholic teaching and hard questions that church members might want to discuss.

Using people's talents by meeting and knowing each other so as to help members to associate more with their church.

What information would help parishioners to understand how their money is used in our church?

The money belongs to the parish.

18% goes to Brentwood to help other parishes.

Finance Committee is a legal necessity for all parishes.

Finances should be discussed once a year with parishioners.

Finances should be discussed at PPC meetings.

Weekly collections should be published every week.

External aid giving should be linked to poorest and underdeveloped areas.

People should be kept up to date on what is given.

People should be able to identify with where their money is going.

Quarterly accounts of income and outgoings.

Meetings at which details can be shared (not just headlines).

Some form of visual presentation.

How the diocese allocates money to individual parishes.

A money flow on the noticeboard.



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Diocese should send accounts to every parish for the priests to distribute to all parishioners.

How can a priest's workload be reduced in the future?

Maintenance and upkeep of the fabric of buildings.

Looking after parish's physical assets.

Priests may need to be trained differently to work with a new system.

Continuity.

A system of strong groups to cover non sacramental areas.

How is the role of a priest defined?

Various different committees to help with specific projects e.g. fundraising.

Extend the role of parish council.

Define priest's role better (Spiritual/pastoral/sacramental/welfare).

Get more deacons.

Increase the ability of the laity to play a greater role.

Improve communication – central register of available priests.

Have a Pastoral Care Team.

Focus him on one building.

Micro parishes are unworkable

Reduce administration.

We have too many buildings past their sell-by date.



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Priests can do a lot when they are doing what they are trained to do.

How can we make more time for praying together as a parish?

Have a parish mission.

Novenas; all day availability; open the Church.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Start new prayer groups.

Provide information for prayer groups to use.

Get more adults formed.

Have a parish prayer book.

Get deanery prayer groups going and have talks given to the groups.

Encourage prayers and meetings away from the church.

Use social media and online resources more.

Have Facebook prayer of the day.

Organise a parish/neighbourhood prayer rota.

Improve Mass – currently cannot be celebrated in a way that enables people to pray.

Use technology.

What can we do to support family life in our parishes?

Families praying together.

School prayers for our families.

Establish neighbourhood groups.



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Create a flexible system – one size does not fit all.

Prayers for First Holy Communion and Confirmation groups.

Outreach from Church to family.

Marriage Care. Invite speakers – invite to a meal and create a family environment.

Promote marriage as a sacrament.

The parish family needs to reach out to families and be aware of specific needs.

What does your priest/you do now that could/should be delegated to a lay person?

We could have more Services of the Word.

Taking Communion to the sick.

Administration.

Doing rotas.

Communication – newsletters – accounts.

A Baptism team could prepare families for the service.

Could other ministries become laicised? Lectors – sub deacon – First Holy Communion and Confirmation preparation groups/ programmes.

Everything short of the sacraments!

Relational stuff and building community. Making connections and visiting people (not just the sick).

All finances.



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Greater support for/ training and recognition of the importance of parish secretarial work and assistance.

Household chores.

Health and Safety.

We should have trained lay chaplains for hospitals.

Finances.

Secretarial work.

Catechesis.

We need Pastoral Assistants.

Old structures are still in place and perhaps new ones are needed.

How can we make our faith more accessible/relevant to children and young people?

Involve them more in organisational and leadership roles.

Reach out.

Advertise things in a way that reaches them. Social media.

Testimony: young people need to hear from us and about why our faith is important, why we attend Mass.

Better religious programming on TV.

Ice breakers to prevent cold hearts.

Family support for children/youth formation



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Charitable activities for children/young people

Sacred art/ music should be a vehicle for engagement.

Get them involved in Christmas/ Easter decoration of the church.

One-to-one conversations and accessible on line materials.

Going into schools more.

Tweets /social media and technology.

Keep recently confirmed young people engaged by involving them with the next class of confirmandees.

Promote Youth chaplaincy.

Develop specific services aimed at/for young people and perhaps Alpha etc for youngsters.

What can we do to make it easier for people to volunteer to help in our parishes?

Direct personal approach to individuals.

Salaried positions to be available.

Make it a feature of every role to ensure succession by coaching/mentoring/ buddying with others.

Ensure parishioners know who volunteers are so that they can be approached. (Directory/ Photos).

One-to-one conversations with people. Find out their interests and talents and link those to the needs of the church.

Have a volunteering event (in Lent?); analyse what eats up time.



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Get people who do things now to tell the story of how they got involved and what they get out of it.

Speed up the painfully slow DBS process.

What could change in your parish to make the life of your priest/ your life better?

Not a lot because a lot has already changed in our parish.

Good training for visiting the sick and taking Holy Communion.

Give parishioners confidence to volunteer.

Get representatives from groups to talk to parishioners in the congregation to get involved with those already active.

Problem solving in-house in the parish.

Secretarial assistance.

A new committee that has elected parishioners from all Mass centres who have a wide variety of responsibilities as well as having an active Steward and assistants.

Encourage younger people to get more involved and to become involved in PPC.

Where there are many different groups in a church, priest knowing about these groups and who they are would help.

Someone to co-ordinate groups and take ideas back to priest from them in a more structured way.

Help with knowing who is doing what in the parish and some history when first arriving.

Sacramental provision

More catechists from laity

Delegating more to the laity.



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Get more volunteers to work with youth and get a paid youth worker for parish or wider area.

Get young people more involved and make them feel more welcomed/valued.

Prioritise young people in the parish – mentor them and increase community involvement by linking the old and the young better.

What can we do to foster Catholic education as a career for young people?

Through local schools by making it an attractive option in those schools.

More catechists to encourage more involvement with young people.

Need schools where we do not have one at the moment.

Parents – social media – being involved in FHC programmes and coming to Mass.

Get a good Catholic Youth Leader.

Supportive Catholic family = teachers and vocations/school.

Actively encourage young people.

Actively work with young parishioners who do not go to Catholic school.

Youth strategy to work and relate to people all across the diocese not be too Brentwood focused. Do things locally.

What changes would improve the whole experience surrounding Sunday Mass?

Music – organist.

Worship being sincere, dignified and honest.

True worship to God.

Parents encouraging their children to respect the Mass and the Church.

Difference Catholic Mass at 9.00a.m. Ordinariate at 11.00. Longer hymns.



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Good homilies.

Get speakers on faith from Brentwood to visit parishes.

Get young people more involved in the liturgy – include young people in offertory procession.

Social connections after Mass to develop a better community.

Do you think that parish buildings (Church/Hall/Presbytery etc) could be put to new uses when parishes start working more closely together?

Yes. Depends on the adaptability of buildings, but yes.

Need to check they have become redundant but it is an opportunity to sell and raise money for the diocese.

Housing for teachers/ lay workers / youth workers in expensive areas.

Resources to support our poorer local communities.

Don't sell but rent out so that property remains available for the future rather than lost completely.

If parishioners fully understood parish finances and property ownership do you think the answer to the above question would be different.

A lack of understanding of finance property issues hampers things.

Parishioners just want to know we're solvent.

It should not affect the alternative uses as we should all be thinking about how to use all premises that are not fully used.

Understanding may well help more ideas to flow, to use properties to help evangelise.

Depends on the parishioner's real engagement. Is it just Sunday or is it deeper?

People need to have a realistic understanding of ownership and canonical issues to understand what is possible.



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How can a Parish Pastoral Council ensure that evangelisation is a theme that runs through all that parish does?

Make it an agenda item/standing order on every agenda.

Every parish should have a Vision to show where it is going/ aiming for/ what is its general identity.

Work of PPC should be evangelisation by definition.

Start every meeting with a focused time of prayer rather than a quick perfunctory prayer and then straight into the agenda.

Have PPC retreat for your individual PPC members or hold joint retreats for people serving on PPC across an area.

Recognise that not everyone is starting from the same place. Ensure that the loudest voice does not hold sway.

Recognise that we have the best News to share but how often do we share it? Foster the courage to do so.

In the afternoon (after hearing from Fr Mark) groups were invited to revisit their thinking from the morning and add additional comments.

We need to spread responsibilities over a large area. There is great scope to work together if we prioritise, structure time and have a team for the priest to delegate to.

Be conscious of the risk of becoming reactive. Some things are inevitable (e.g. bury the dead) and unpredictable.

Comments from Fr M reinforced the need for lay support – the right kind of support.

Priests need to know and have a handle on everything that is going on in a parish.

Every priest should have a spiritual director. We need to be aware of the dangers of isolation.



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Do priests get a day off – a need for “recreation”.

Need to balance help and control. Flexibility and authority needed for parish priest.

No compulsory bureaucracy.

Priest’s life is like an iceberg – we only see 1/3 of it.

How priests see the privilege of their role.

How to involve the laity in doing jobs.

Lay people to accept that their life experience and faith journey are a sound basis for sharing this with others.

Heineken principle: an act of humility – laity to shine light on others. Collaboration of clergy and laity.

We all need to take the exercise more seriously.

Influence of priests visiting our schools is important.

As a lay person we can all evangelise the places we work.

We need to work more ecumenically.

Catholic Voice should visit our parishes.

Refreshment for our priests – retreats etc: will there be time in the New World?

Sacred interaction between priests and people. Priests feel strongly that there will not be time for themselves if they are to cover several parishes – particularly in country areas which are spread out.

Trusting parishioners who have skills could enable the parish.

As one gets older being bold and creative is difficult.

Democracy of the Dead – Catholic traditions.



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It would be useful to have a day in the life of a priest so that parishioners get an insight.

Can uniformity and common practice be developed across diocese so that lay roles are established with job role descriptions common to all?

Should Communion and Confirmation programmes be common to groups of parishes to unite young people in a shared experience and alleviate demands on priests and individual parishes?

Need to relieve priests of duties that lay people could do but honour and support individual priest's personal gifts of ministry so that these can continue.

The distinction between priests and the people needs to be re-thought. There are things that the priests are doing that would be better placed with the people and vice versa.

Priests think that there should be larger parishes to reduce the burden of building management. There should be a parish administrator who should be paid.

Priests as servants – flexible – monarchical model?

Laitry working collaboratively with clergy.

The importance of speaking out publicly; the relationship of the public message of the homily to everyday life.

Listening is vital.

Cultural awareness in every faith-based community is important.

Build on the enthusiasm of recent converts.