



The  
Catholic  
Diocese of  
Nottingham

# “Go, make disciples”

Five year Mission Plan for the  
Diocese of Nottingham  
2026 – 2030



# Contents

<b>Section 1: Our starting point</b>	03
• Our three themes- Encounter, Discipleship, Mission	
• The Holy Spirit and the Eucharist	
<b>Section 2: Reading the signs of the times</b>	21
• Context	
• Challenges	
• Opportunities	
• Signs of hope	
<b>Section 3: What are we being called to?</b>	29
• Encounter- experiencing God's love	
• Discipleship- supporting ongoing conversion	
• Mission- nurturing witness of life	
<b>Section 4: Where do we start?</b>	37
• Priority 1- bringing the themes to life	
• Priority 2- equipping the Laity	
• Priority 3- supporting Clergy	
• Priority 4- aligning infrastructure and resources for mission	
<b>Section 5: How do we do this?</b>	03
• Priority 1- practical steps to bring the themes to life	
• Priority 2- practical steps to equip the Laity	
• Priority 3- practical steps to support Clergy	
• Priority 4- practical steps to align infrastructure and resources	
<b>Section 6: Concluding comments</b>	43
<b>Appendix A</b>	Describing our Destination – a tool for parishes
<b>Appendix B</b>	Parish Ideas for Action Tool
<b>Appendix C</b>	Youth Ministry Ideas for Action Tool
<b>Appendix D</b>	Data Sources and Map of the Diocese

NOTTINGHAM

OUR LADY IMMACULATE

PRAY FOR US



# Section 1 Our Starting Point

A photograph showing a group of people from behind, standing in a line outside a stone building with a large arched entrance. The people are dressed in various casual and semi-casual attire, including jackets and hoodies. The scene suggests a group gathering or a line of people waiting to enter a place of worship or a similar setting.

Encounter  
Discipleship  
Mission  
The Holy Spirit & the Eucharist





Early on in my time as your Bishop I remember being asked about a plan for the diocese. I responded by saying that I was still new to the diocese, that I was studying the previous planning document, 'You are Living Stones', and I was now engaged in visiting parishes, chaplaincies and schools, as well as meeting the Religious and a wide variety of people. I reasoned that my immediate priority was to get to know something of the history and the strengths of the diocese, to learn more of what was actually happening in the parishes, chaplaincies, schools and organisations and, most importantly of all, to get to know the people of the diocese and to listen to their personal experiences.

While that listening process was going on, and I knew it couldn't be rushed, I recognised that, above all, we needed to seek to discern, through prayer and openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, what the Lord wanted our diocese to focus on. This would be the most appropriate way of building upon the good work outlined in 'You are Living Stones'. As the Psalmist reminds us, "*unless the Lord build the house, in vain do its builders labour*" (Ps. 127).

The fruit of that initial listening to laity, clergy and religious, and to God in prayer, was clarity that:

- our aim is not to manage decline, but rather to reshape our structures for renewal, growth, and mission.
- God is calling us to make the same three spiritual themes, that have characterised the Church throughout the ages, the foundation for all we do in the diocese, namely: encounter, discipleship and missionary discipleship (or, to put it more simply, mission).
- all we do needs to be inspired and enabled by the Holy Spirit and nourished by the Eucharist.

So, first of all, what do we mean by each of these spiritual themes, what are some of the implications of these themes in the context of the Diocesan Mission Plan, and how are we enabled to live them out by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist?

Go  
make  
disciples



# Encounter

## Experiencing God's Love

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*“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love” (Jn 15:9)*



**Action:** every person is helped to encounter, ever more deeply, Jesus' love and to choose personally to follow Him

The starting point for everything we might wish to see happening across our diocese is our own personal encounter with Christ Jesus in prayer, and our openness to be guided by the Holy Spirit in the daily living out of our faith. As the late Pope Francis reminded us,

*"without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants each of us to be people who bear witness to His good news, not only with words but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence."* (Evangelii Gaudium, 259).

As we prepare to set out on this Diocesan Mission Plan for the next five years, I am convinced, in fidelity to the Church's teaching, that we are each being called upon to place the need for an ever-deeper personal encounter with Jesus Christ, and an ever-greater openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, at the heart of our lives, our diocesan structures, and our ways of doing things. Why? Because it is our daily encounter with Jesus in prayer that helps us to become His disciples. If we ourselves have not allowed the Lord to welcome us into his friendship, to experience more and more personally His love and mercy and the guidance and help of his Holy Spirit in our own lives, then how with any authenticity can we speak of this to others? It remains my experience as a priest, and now as a bishop, that many of us as Catholics still need to be helped to believe that God loves us personally and that He wishes each of us to experience His merciful love. Pope Francis began his encyclical, Evangelii Gaudium, in this way:

*"I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this*

*unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her... whenever we take a step towards Jesus we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms."* (EG 3)

It is from this living encounter with the Lord in our daily lives, in prayer, in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, and in openness to the Holy Spirit, that all genuine renewal in the diocese becomes possible; it is here that our sharing in the mission that Christ gave His disciples finds its source and inspiration:

*"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, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age".* (Mt 28:19-20).

It is our personal relationship with Christ Jesus, in good and in difficult times, that throws light on, that shapes, the way we live our lives, our priorities, and the choices we make.

### **What are the implications of this?**

In the context of the Diocesan Mission Plan, and what we want for our parishes, chaplaincies and schools, this would mean that it would become increasingly normal over the next five years for Catholics across our diocese to know personally God's love, to have a solid daily prayer time, and to turn frequently to the presence of God in the sacraments and the scriptures. Why? So that we all receive the support, strength and guidance of God for the living out of our faith in service of the common good and the building up of God's Kingdom here on earth.

# Discipleship

## Supporting Ongoing Conversion

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*“If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:31)*



**Action:** Every person is supported in growing daily as Jesus' disciple; there are prayerful and reverent liturgies and clear discipleship pathways, both at the parish level and in small groups.

Once a person has encountered Christ and has made a decision to follow Him, the process of ongoing conversion, of openness to the Holy Spirit and growth in ever greater spiritual, intellectual, emotional and human maturity, can begin to develop. Over time each person becomes ever more fully a student and co-worker of Jesus, and the grateful recipient of His mercy:

### **A disciple is primarily the student of a teacher**

As Christ's disciples we are therefore people who wish to learn from Jesus, our Master, and to grow in our relationship with him. This is reflected in a growing life of prayer and of encounters with Christ in our daily life, in personal prayer, in the sacraments, and the scriptures. It is supported by developing habits which help us to grow in virtue, in commitment to learning more about the person and teachings of Christ, and in dedicated service to others.

### **A disciple is a co-worker with Jesus**

A disciple is also someone who wishes to work with Jesus, to be a co-worker. Disciples try to be a means by which God's love, care, compassion, healing and forgiveness can be ministered through them to others. The disciple is very much someone who is trying each day to move from a 'me-centred' relationship with Christ, which is exclusively about them, to one that seeks to hear and respond to what Christ may be inviting them to do in their daily lives: *'Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will'* (Psalm 40). This does not happen overnight, but it comes to life through the choices we make day by day.

Christ Jesus is constantly inviting us to be His disciples, His co-workers, in and through the daily circumstances of our lives, in our home, our school or college, our place of work, our parish and neighbourhood. St Teresa of Avila is reputed to have expressed it in this way:

*"Christ has no body on earth now but yours, no hands, but yours; no feet but yours; yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on the world; yours are the feet with which he walks to do good; yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world."*

When celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation I have been encouraging the candidates, especially the young people, to see themselves as Christ's disciples, His co-workers. I ask them to begin each day with a simple prayer such as, *'so Lord, what today are you and I going to do together?'* I ask them to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that they may be helped to see little opportunities each day when they can put their faith into action, when they can bear witness to Christ by sharing His love and compassion with others around them by means of little acts of kindness, care and forgiveness.

### **A disciple is a grateful recipient of God's merciful and healing forgiveness**

Through prayer, disciples know that they often fall short of what Christ desires for them. So disciples acknowledge that there are things in their lives that, with the help of God's grace, they need to let go of, things that prevent them from becoming the disciple Christ is calling and inviting them to become.

Seeking God's merciful and healing forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps them, in turn, to become instruments of that mercy and forgiveness to others. Disciples are deeply aware that Christ is calling them to holiness of life in and through the ordinary daily circumstances of their lives. They are people who pray for the grace, the help of God, to open their hearts and lives more and more to God, who alone is holy and so is the source of holiness for them: *'Be holy for I am holy'* (Lev 11:44).

### **What are the implications of this?**

In the context of our Diocesan Mission Plan, and what we want for our parishes, chaplaincies and schools, this would mean that, over the next five years, people are being helped and enabled to live as a student of Jesus, to work with Him, and to receive His mercy and help. In practical terms this will include offering: clear pathways to help them grow as disciples so that the "next step" is easy to identify and act upon; the support of a parish community where they can journey with others in the life of faith through larger scale gatherings and with opportunities also for small group participation. All of this is being regularly nourished by reverent transformative liturgies that enable solid worship of God, strengthen those already practicing their faith, and which welcome newcomers, so that we are all helped to participate ever more fully in the Mass and know its power in our lives and in our being sent out as Christ's disciples into the wider community.





# Mission

## Nurturing Witness of Life

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*“When the Advocate comes whom I shall send to you from the Father... he will be my witness, and you too will be my witnesses” (Jn 15: 26-27)*



**Action:** Every person is enabled, through greater openness to the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to give witness to the power of Jesus' love and mercy and to help others to know and follow Jesus. In the parish, people would be better equipped for outreach and mission into their families and into our schools, hospitals, prisons, and the local neighbourhood, and they would be helped to engage more confidently both with those who have drifted away from the Church and with those who know nothing about God.

The truth of course is, as I said earlier, that this personal and diocesan call to mission comes from the Risen Christ who gave this instruction before his Ascension, "Go, make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19, Mk 16:15, Lk 24:48 and Jn 20:21). In the Vatican II document, Lumen Gentium, the mission was described in this way,

*"The Church has received this solemn mandate of Christ to proclaim the saving truth from the apostles and must carry it out to the very ends of the earth" (LG, 17).*

It is therefore much more true to say, 'the Church doesn't have a mission, the mission has a church'. The Church's role, and so our own personal and diocesan mission, is to bear witness to Christ and His teaching in the way we live our lives; it is also a calling to share our faith with others so that they too will become disciples of Jesus Christ. This, of necessity, involves an openness to the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in our personal lives and an acceptance of the need for personal renewal, and of renewal throughout our diocese, in the way we think, speak and act.

### **What are the implications of this?**

In the context of our Diocesan Mission Plan, and what we want for our parishes, chaplaincies and schools, we recognise that as Catholics most of us are familiar

with prayer, through Mass, the scriptures, rosary, other devotions, and our own personal prayer, and we are committed to serving our Church, through helping in our parishes, chaplaincies and schools. However, many of us are less comfortable exploring questions of faith with others or talking about our own relationship with God. Some of us feel unskilled in this area, yet Christ invites each of us to play our part in helping others to know and follow Him. He also calls us to be His witness through our actions, reaching out in love and service to the society and wider world far beyond our church walls, and in caring for our common home.

Answering Christ's call will mean that, over the next five years, our parishes, chaplaincies, schools, small groups and families, become ever-more mission-focused communities where people do not just grow in faith, but recognise the call for them to be a witness to Christ in their daily life and to actively reach out to others through both individual and communal evangelisation. This would involve offering "easy ways in" for people to hear and accept the Good News, whatever their starting point. It would also mean engaging in practical outreach that helps meet the needs of their wider community.

# The Holy Spirit & The Eucharist

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We are enabled to live out these three spiritual themes by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual nourishment of the Eucharist



Come +

### **The essential role of the Holy Spirit**

The vitality and future of our parishes, and of our diocese as a whole, and our capacity to share more fully in Christ's mission, depends very much on our desire and ability to be faithful to His call by cooperating with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will help us to draw other people towards knowledge of and friendship with Jesus Christ and, at the same time, ensure that we ourselves continue to encounter Him ever more deeply. As Pope St John Paul II expressed it,

*"The Holy Spirit is like a wind filling the sails of the great ship of the Church. If, however, we look at her closely, she uses numerous other sails that are the hearts of the baptised. Everyone, dear friends, is invited to hoist their sails, to unfurl them with courage and to permit the Spirit to act with all his sanctifying power. By allowing the Spirit to act in one's life, one also makes the best contribution to the mission of the Church. Do not be afraid to unfurl your sails to the breath of the Spirit."*

(Address to the Superiors and students of the Archdiocesan Seminary of Florence, April, 1988)

The first disciples, huddled together in the Upper Room, were people who had heard, spent time with, and had accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah. But they were afraid, and felt helpless and limited in their ability to

share with others what Jesus had taught them and their experience of His death and Resurrection. They needed first to receive and respond to the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised, so that their lives could be transformed and empowered to become His missionary disciples. It was as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples that the Church was born at Pentecost and that it quickly grew. The same is true in our own lives. The Holy Spirit, that was poured out upon those first disciples and which enabled them to overcome their fears and to be changed into courageous people, has been given to us in baptism and Confirmation. That guidance and help, understood, sought and responded to, can change our lives. All the grace we need is given to us in baptism and Confirmation, but we must be willing to cooperate with God.

The full release of the power of the Holy Spirit within us is not something that happens automatically through baptism and Confirmation. We are invited to open our lives to the Holy Spirit and regularly to call upon that help, guidance and inspiration. When our expectation of what the Holy Spirit can do in our lives is low, then little will happen. But the more we acknowledge our need of the Holy Spirit and that we can do nothing without the Holy Spirit, and we then regularly begin to open ourselves to that help, guidance and inspiration, the more we will find that our lives become more fruitful in the service of God.

With fewer priests and, in some parishes, a declining number of active parishioners, we cannot continue doing everything we once did. But in prayer, and guided by the Holy Spirit, I believe we must ask more and more for the grace to discover what God wishes to see happen in our lives and throughout our diocese.

### **The vital place of the Eucharist in responding to our call from Christ to make disciples**

In Pastoral Letters over the past few years, I have been encouraging people to think more about the Mass in these two ways: first, as a treasured place where we can truly encounter Christ Jesus, our Saviour; then, secondly, to see Christ himself, whom we encounter in Mass, as the one who motivates and sends us out to recognise, love and honour His presence in all the people we meet, family, friends, neighbours, and especially the disadvantaged and those most in need.

In our celebration of Mass, the Crucified and Risen Lord invites each of us to encounter Him; we come into His presence and we are invited to open our hearts to Him.

Why? Because He loves us and cares about all that is going on in our lives. It is in Mass that we remember and celebrate the sacrifice that Jesus made for us through His death on the Cross and His Resurrection from the dead. We celebrate that the Crucified and Risen Christ Jesus is now truly here for each of us in Mass as the Bread of Life and as the Chalice of Salvation. He feeds us spiritually, and brings us His strength, comfort and healing. He also empowers and sends us out to bear courageous witness to Him in our daily lives, safe in the knowledge that He walks with us and so we are never on our own. What must we do at Mass, in addition to offering praise and thanks, so that we can truly have a heart-to-heart encounter with Christ? Simply this: bring to Him all that is going on in our lives- our joys, hopes and desires, as well as our worries and struggles, particularly the ways in which we feel we fall short of what we know the Lord wants for us. It is also, through listening to the scriptures- a place where we are invited to let the Lord teach and inspire us, and in seeking to be fed spiritually in Holy Communion, that we allow Him to nourish and help us to live out our faith each day.



This leads to the second way of looking at the Mass; to see it as an encouragement, challenge and inspiration to the ways in which we live out our faith. Pope St. John Paul II spoke of the Eucharist as "*the active school of love for neighbour*" (Dominicae Cenae, 6). He saw clearly the unity there should be between the breaking of the Eucharistic bread in the Mass and our Christian commitment each day to work with Christ for the creation of a world transformed by His love, forgiveness, compassion and mercy. St. John Paul II recognised that it is in the Mass, in our encounter there with Christ, that we are challenged and encouraged to grow in greater awareness of the dignity of each and every person in the eyes of God. Christ Jesus, whom we truly encounter in Mass, wishes to fashion us, His disciples, into a community of people who seek to unite prayer with action, praise with the seeking of justice, and adoration with the transformation of our society. Why at Mass? Because we believe that the Risen Christ, who is truly present in the Eucharist, whom we receive in Holy Communion, and to whom we rightly show such respect and reverence, is the same Christ Jesus who is also truly present in every person whom we encounter, and especially in the disadvantaged and those most in need.

In and through our encounter with Christ in Mass, we find ourselves sent out to love and serve Him in those we meet each day, in our homes, places of work and neighbourhoods. Christ is the WHY behind everything we each do as

His disciples. He it is who motivates and sends us out from Mass into the local communities, to recognise, love, honour and serve Him in everyone we encounter each day. This inseparable connection between the Eucharist and our response to the needs of others around us, especially the disadvantaged and exploited, cannot be emphasised enough. The breaking of bread, the transformation of what is bread and wine into the sacramental presence of Christ in Mass, asks of us that we allow ourselves to be transformed, guided and sent out by the Lord. In this way we can each play our part, as the Lord's instruments, in shaping our society and wider world more in accordance with the values of God's Kingdom.

I warmly welcome this opportunity to acknowledge that I am so proud of, and grateful for, all that parishioners and students in our diocesan chaplaincies and schools do to treasure and to live out each day our beautiful Eucharistic faith!

Across all 3 spiritual themes, with the help of the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist, we each have a role to play as individuals, and in the wider context of our families, parishes, chaplaincies, schools and Catholic organisations. Encouragingly, much good work has already been done over the years, and also in more recent years, and so we must recognise this and give God thanks for these signs of hope. All of this gives us a good spiritual foundation for mission as we now consider both the challenges and opportunities we face as a diocese.

# Section 2

# Reading the signs of the times

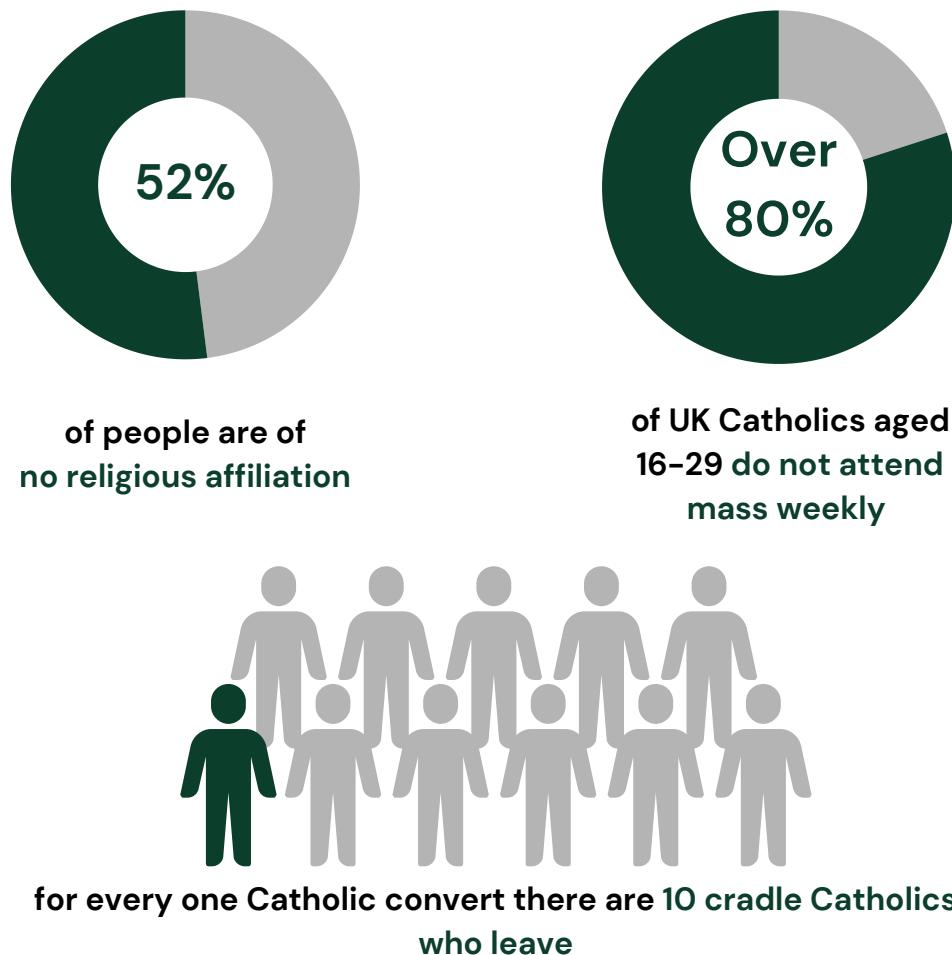
**Context**  
**Challenges**  
**Opportunities**  
**Signs of Hope**



## Context

The world around us has changed radically and continues to change. Experience tells us we have work to do to become a vibrant healthy Church.

The research that Professor Stephen Bullivant of St Mary's University (see Appendix D) shared with the diocesan clergy a few years ago suggested that Britain is becoming more secular because older people with an attachment to Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular, are gradually being replaced by religiously unaffiliated younger people ("nones"). To put it another way, religious decline in Britain is generational; people tend to be less religious than their parents, and on average their children are even less religious than they are. It follows that there is a degree of future decline built in as children are increasingly raised in homes where there isn't a religious affiliation. Overall:



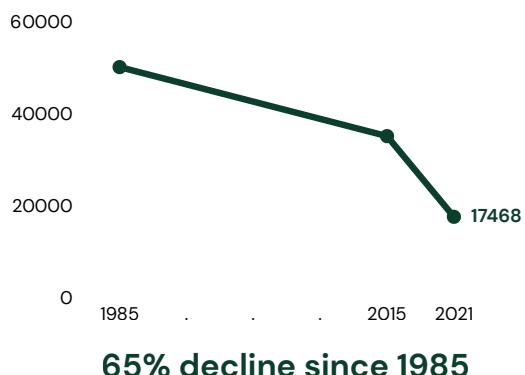
Our approach can no longer assume we are talking to people familiar with Christianity. The fastest-growing religious affiliation in the UK today is "none". **This is a new age; we are in mission territory.**

# Challenges

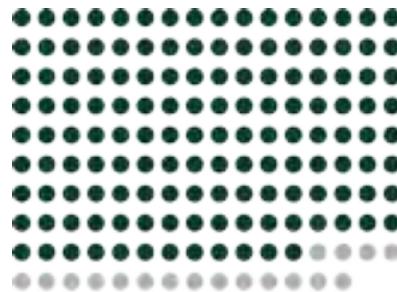
## Diocesan Deanery Lenten Roadshows 2022

During the Deanery Lenten Roadshows of 2022 I presented some of the challenges facing the diocese and the restructuring needed to respond positively. The following data sets were presented in the course of these Roadshows:

### Mass Attendance

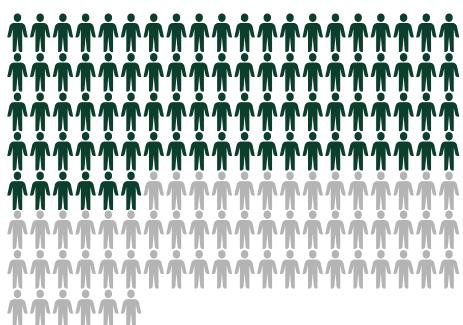


### Churches with Sunday Mass



**Minimal 11% reduction – infrastructure stable despite declining attendance, fewer priests**

### Number of Active Priests



**41% decline since 1985**

### Priestly Vocations



**Dramatic fall – 94% reduction in priestly vocations from 34 to 2**



## Outcome of the 2022 Roadshows

There was recognition during the Lenten Roadshows that we can't continue as we are, as a diocese made up of many parishes that are numerically in decline and struggling financially. Now is the time to complete the consultation about the reorganisation of our parishes and deaneries so that we can better pool together our more limited human resources. Why? So as to try and to ensure pastoral care across our geographically large diocese and to enable us to become more missionary in our outlook and practice. There was general understanding that difficult decisions must be taken before these decisions are simply forced upon us. The amalgamation of parishes is now well under way. The plan is that our total of 108 parishes in 2022 will by Pentecost 2026, and after ongoing careful consultation and canonical guidance, be amalgamated to form new larger parishes. The total number of parishes, including 11 stand-alone parishes (not amalgamated and often in more rural areas), will then be 54.

While acknowledging the declining number of priests and of parishioners in some parts of the diocese, there was a hesitant recognition that a deeper crisis has been our failure as a Church, over many generations, to form disciples so as to be more missionary. This reality must lie at the heart of all that we do to reorganise our structures, so that our parishes, chaplaincies, schools and diocesan Central Support Services (curia) become ever more missionary.

**The recent diocesan 2025 data is as follows:**

- Mass attendance was 28, 285 – a reduction of 44% since 1985;
- we had 73 active priests – a reduction of 50% since 1985;
- we had 139 churches in which Sunday Mass was celebrated – a reduction of 12% since 1985;
- we had two students in major seminary, none in pre-seminary, no junior seminary now exists, and five training for the Permanent Diaconate which continues to be a very helpful ministry across the diocese.



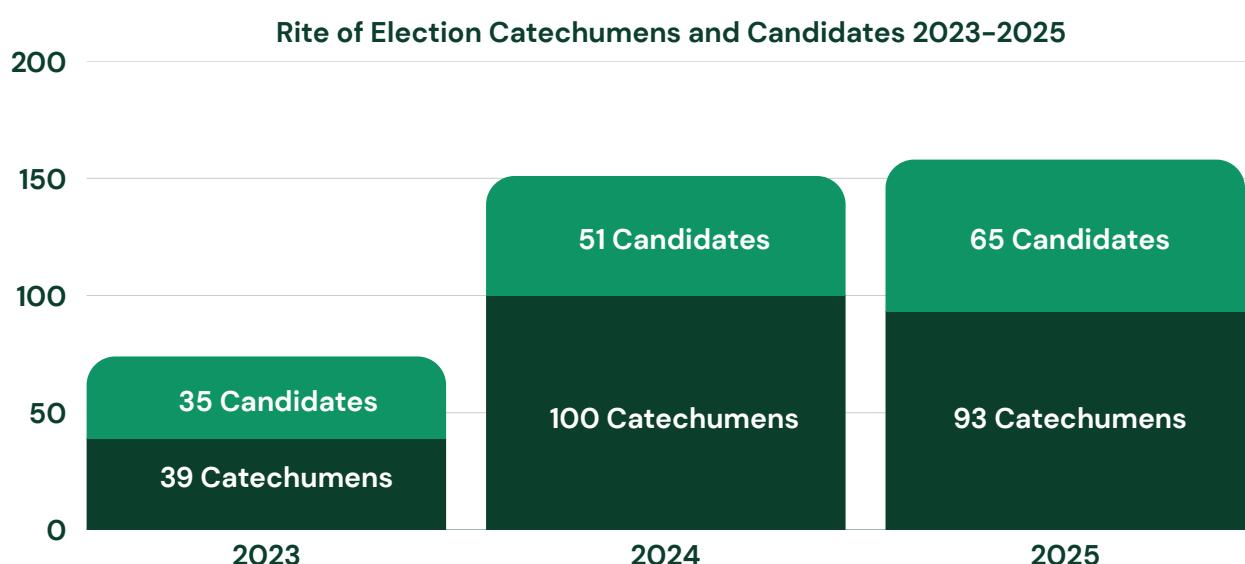
# Opportunities

Along with the challenges, we also find unexpected opportunities and reasons for hope grounded in Christ. Indeed, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear (Mt 13:16), we will recognise that God is very much at work in this moment. People are hungry for meaning and purpose in life, given the record rates of loneliness, isolation, anxiety and despair in our society. Many people do believe in the existence of God, even amongst those who claim to be "spiritual, but not religious." Our troubled times create an openness in people's hearts that we know only Christ can fill as the answer to their questions about life.

Culturally, we also see signs of openness to faith. For example, the late Pope Francis was greatly loved and respected throughout the world, and his influence was shown in the increasing number of people researching the Catholic faith around the time of his final public appearance and death. According to Vatican Tickets and Tours,

searches for how to become Catholic increased by more than three times. There was great worldwide interest in the Conclave, including here in Britain, which concluded with the election of Cardinal Robert Prevost as Pope Leo XIV, and interest in what he says and does remains strong.

Research published by the Bible Society in summer 2025 ("The Quiet Revival" report), showed a rise in young people between 18 – 34, especially young men, showing an interest in Christianity, and Catholicism in particular. This age group includes some Gen Z young people, the first true digital native generation, who show a strong interest in social justice issues, environmental concerns and political engagement. The data provided by this research is echoed in the steady increase in the number of people, young adults among them, who wish to learn more about Catholicism and who have been received at the Easter Vigil Mass in many parishes across our diocese these last few years.

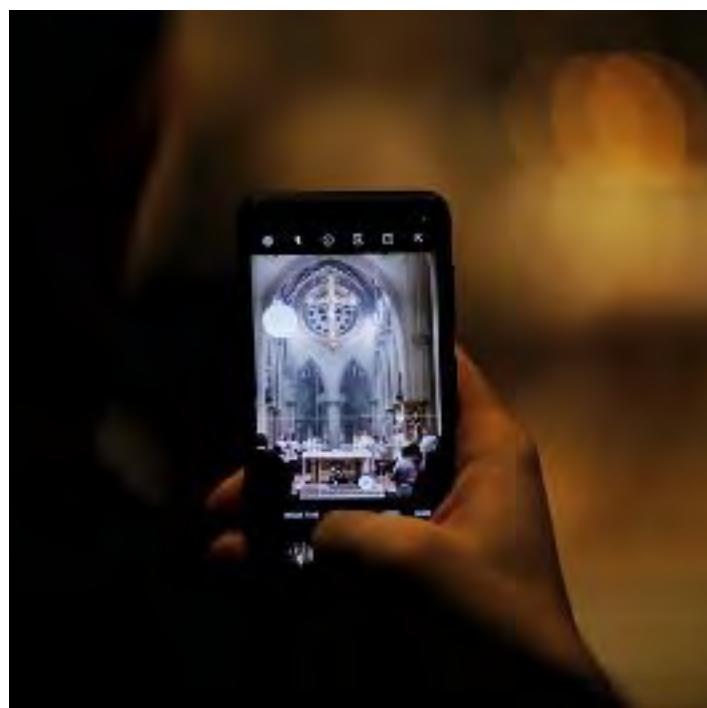


# Signs of Hope

It is heartening to see how our efforts to embrace the three themes are already bearing fruit in practical ways. Here are some of the signs of hope I have witnessed:

- many schools have adopted the spiritual themes, and see young people enthusiastically engage in periods of Eucharistic Adoration; many excellent school Chaplaincy teams of students combine helping to prepare liturgies with fundraising for local charities and putting their faith into action; I repeatedly hear stories of students who have encountered Jesus's personal love for them, who see themselves as His disciples and who recognise more clearly the vital connection between the Eucharist and social action.
- the Cathedral and other parishes are making excellent use of social media to engage and attract people to the Church, encouraging the creative involvement of young people and young adults on platforms like Instagram and TikTok.
- parishes offering Alpha and Sycamore courses regularly share joyful stories of seeing those who knew nothing of Christ, experiencing His love, becoming His followers, and joining the worshipping community. I acknowledge the good work of our catechists and the formation, support and encouragement provided by various diocesan staff to help this happen.
- a number of parishes are developing youth outreach programmes. Some are employing youth workers and others are receiving initial support
- from the Diocesan Youth Services; the recent review of the Youth Service has identified several innovations to help strengthen support for parishes and chaplaincies with youth outreach programmes.
- parishes are building upon their encounter with Christ in the Eucharist and taking practical steps to respond to His presence in the faces of some of the most disadvantaged people in their local community, through local food banks, warm banks, soup kitchens, the work of parish Justice and Peace, Legion of Mary and St Vincent de Paul groups; in the collection of warm clothes for the homeless, especially during winter; and in practical care for those seeking a refuge and a welcome in the local area. I acknowledge the encouragement and support that Caritas Nottingham continues to provide.
- so many families allow me a glimpse into their stories of sharing faith with others through simple gestures of kindness and care, offering to pray for a sick colleague or helping a neighbour, etc.; families who gather together locally to pray and to offer each other encouragement and practical support.

These steps encourage us, revealing that as we answer the call to encounter, discipleship, and mission, the Lord blesses our efforts with real fruit. Yet, we must acknowledge there is much more to be done. As we implement our Diocesan Mission Plan for 2026–2030, we must meet the real challenges and opportunities of our age with the hope, creativity, energy and commitment Our Lord desires of us. So, what is the Diocese of Nottingham being called to over the next five years?



# Section 3

# What are we being called to?

We know that if we do nothing by way of parish renewal over the next five years some of our parishes will run the risk of no longer remaining viable. More positively we know that God is still calling His Church to grow in holiness and to make new disciples through focusing on encounter, discipleship and mission.

Over the next 5 years, nourished by the Eucharist and prayer, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we therefore boldly commit our diocese to making these three spiritual themes ever more clearly the foundations for all that we seek to do. So what will this look like?

**Encounter**  
Experiencing God's  
Love



**PLEASE REFER TO  
APPENDIX A**

This offers a simple tool to help parishes prayerfully sketch out what this vision might look like as it comes to life in their own unique context. Schools, chaplaincies and other groups are encouraged to use the framework to develop an equivalent for their particular setting.

**Discipleship**  
Supporting Ongoing  
Conversion

**Mission**  
Nurturing Witness  
of Life



# Encounter

## Experiencing God's Love

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*“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you;  
abide in my love” (Jn 15:9)*

**We commit to becoming a diocese where people are helped to experience God's love and to grow in an ever-deeper personal relationship with Christ.**

## **What will this look like?**

### **By 2030:**

- our parishes, schools and chaplaincies are offering help and practical resources to enable people to grow in prayer and in their engagement with the Sacraments.
- it is normal for the majority of people across our diocese to have a daily prayer time and routinely speak about the difference this makes.
- many more people have a deep appreciation of the centrality of the Eucharist and of Eucharistic Devotion in expressing our love of God and our love of neighbour in the living out of our faith. This will be nurtured through offering more and more opportunities for Mass and Adoration in our parishes, schools and chaplaincies. Deaneries will work together to facilitate this by aligning times of Adoration across parishes and making this more widely known in each deanery.
- Sunday Mass has become a life-giving central point for more people – they make it a priority to come together with others to worship God and be nourished by Him for their engagement in daily acts of mission.
- we see more and more people coming to weekday Mass in our parishes as part of their regular routine and at times that suit people's busy schedules. In all our schools there are, at the very least, opportunities each half-term for the pupils/students to participate in the celebration of Mass and also in times of Adoration.
- we see people of all ages coming regularly to Adoration and talking about their experience of this with others, even bringing new people along.
- the number of scripture-sharing opportunities in parishes and chaplaincies is bearing fruit in deepening people's relationship with God.
- we offer people clear signposts to where they can receive further spiritual support, such as different ways of praying, Spiritual Direction.



# Discipleship

## Supporting Ongoing Conversion

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*"If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8:31)*

**We commit to becoming a diocese where people are supported in growing daily as Jesus's disciples.**

## **What will this look like?**

### **By 2030:**

- those who have encountered Christ have accepted the gift of the inspiration and guidance of God's Holy Spirit in their daily lives, and are helped to live in right relationship with Christ and one another, and to grow continually as His disciples.
- our celebrations of the Mass, and particularly Sunday Mass, are reverent and transformative, helping people of all ages to encounter and be nourished by God at the table of the Word (scriptures/homily) and at the table of the Eucharist, so as to be sent out again as Christ's disciples to share in His mission.
- we regularly hear stories of healing, new life and freedom through the experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation celebrated at times that suit a growing number of busy people.
- people are formed, equipped and supported, to live a life of faith. They are offered clear 'next steps to grow in their faith' and are experiencing freedom, purpose, and joy in their relationship with the Lord.
- there are different ways for people to journey together in both large and small faith groups in their parishes, encouraging and supporting each other in living as a disciple of Christ.
- we see many examples of people responding to God's call, including vocations to the single life, priesthood, Christian marriage, religious and consecrated life.



# Mission

## Nurturing Witness Of Life

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*“When the Advocate comes whom I shall send to you from the Father... he will be my witness and you too will be my witnesses” (Jn 15:26-27)*

**We commit to becoming a diocese where people know they are called to witness to Christ in everyday life, and are supported to do this in practical ways, both on their own and together with others.**

## **What will this look like?**

### **By 2030:**

- our parishes, schools and chaplaincies help our people grow in their understanding of Christ's call to both personal holiness and fruitful mission, and how it applies to each one of us.
- through ongoing formation and support, many more people have both the desire and the confidence to speak of Christ to others and make the most of every opportunity in their daily life to share courageously the Gospel (proclamation) and to make space for God to act (demonstration) so that others also might encounter Christ's love for them.
- we have become a Church that is innovative and effective in helping others to come to know Jesus in a world that desperately needs Him. In particular, our parishes, schools and chaplaincies help children, young people, families, young adults, and people of all ages to discover, in accordance with their spiritual maturity, that they are each loved by God, are invited into a personal relationship with the Lord, and are called into His service individually and communally as His missionary disciples.
- in addition, our schools, parishes and chaplaincies are more outward-looking, responding to people's authentic practical needs through outreach to their wider local community, and so are more missionary.
- many in our diocese have responded powerfully to that invitation to deepen their personal relationship with the Lord by choosing to follow Christ and by bearing witness to Him in the way they live their daily lives.
- we actively seek ecumenical opportunities across our diocese, out of our united love for Christ, to pray together and work with local Christian communities in the service of our wider local communities. We also work with people of other faiths to grow in knowledge and respect for each other and to serve those in need.
- our parishes, schools and chaplaincies underpin all our action in mission with unrelenting prayer, recognising that, while we all have a part to play in this, it is the Holy Spirit who truly evangelises (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 75).

# Section 4

# Where do we start?

## Priority 1

Bringing the themes to life

## Priority 2

Equipping the Laity

## Priority 3

Supporting Clergy

## Priority 4

Aligning infrastructure and resources for mission



# PRIORITY 1

Take practical steps to bring to life the vision for Encounter, Discipleship and Mission

## Our aim in this priority is to help people of all ages to:

- experience God's love- enabling them to personally encounter and deepen still more their appreciation of God's love for them.
- be supported in on-going conversion- fostering a culture of discipleship so each person is helped to live out an ever-deepening personal relationship with the Lord.
- be nurtured in witness of life- helping them be open to the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that, in accordance with their spiritual maturity, they live out their part in the Church's Mission in all circumstances of their daily lives, sharing humbly and joyfully with others the difference that knowing Christ Jesus makes to their lives.



# PRIORITY 2

Equip the laity to work alongside clergy in renewing parishes for mission

**Our aim in this priority is to equip more lay women and men in our parishes such that they:**

- discover, or rediscover ever more personally, that as disciples of the Risen Lord they are each called in their daily lives to share in Christ's mission to make disciples and that, with the help of God's grace, prayer, and much support and encouragement from clergy, it can be done.
- have a deeper understanding of how gifted they each are, and of how this God-given giftedness can be used in the service of mission in their daily lives and in their parish.
- are equipped and enabled to work alongside priests and deacons in parishes to orient pastoral practice to the three spiritual themes.
- understand and act on the need to ensure everything is deeply rooted in a personal and corporate life of prayer and openness to the inspiration and guidance of God's Holy Spirit.
- benefit from having a simple, clear parish planning process and regular parish visits by the Bishop / Vicars General, which help build momentum for putting the Diocesan Mission Plan into practice.



# PRIORITY 3

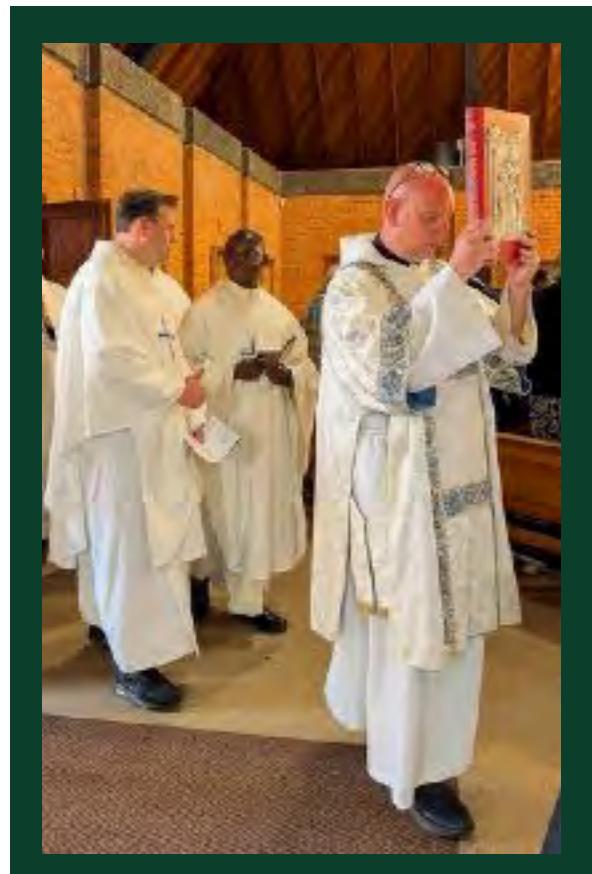
Equip and support our clergy as leaders and enablers of mission

**Our aim in this priority is to deepen still more the understanding on the part of each priest, deacon and the bishop that:**

- they are each loved by God and are continually invited into a still more personal relationship with the Lord (Encounter–supporting growth in prayer).
- they are continually called to grow in their life of discipleship and in openness to the inspiration, guidance and empowerment of God's Holy Spirit in their ministry. (Discipleship–supporting ongoing conversion).
- the sharing with others of what it means to know Jesus and be part of His mission drives everything that happens within their parish/chaplaincy in support of the spiritual life of their parishioners and their relationships with others when at work, in their neighbourhood and in their families (Mission–nurturing witness of life).

We will also ensure

- clergy receive the tools and support they may feel they need to identify what is essential to their own role, and then to identify the people who have the skills, gifts, experience or willingness, to take on complimentary leadership roles that, with appropriate formation, could be delegated to them to help with both the administration and the more outward/missionary direction of the parish, the chaplaincy or the diocesan structure.
- each priest and deacon gets any help they might need to establish a small group of people (Mission Leadership Team) who will advise, support and work with them to help bring the three themes to life in their unique context.



# PRIORITY 4

Align diocesan and parish infrastructure and resources to serve mission

**Our aim is to make sure spiritual renewal is supported by structural renewal so that our parishes, chaplaincies, and the diocese have the resources needed to be sustainable and engage effectively in mission. We will do this by:**

- finishing the parish amalgamation begun in 2022 to form 54 larger parishes that have the money, skills, and resources to thrive for years to come.
- taking on more finance, property, HR, safeguarding, and governance work centrally, so priests and parish teams can focus on caring for people, sharing the Gospel, and building community.
- setting up forums and spaces to enable synodal listening on key topics.
- providing support through the Diocesan Youth Service to help parishes share the Good News with young people in impactful ways.
- providing extra funding for mission through the Enabling our Mission Campaign.
- ensuring diocesan systems and ways of working are tightly aligned to delivery of the Diocesan Mission Plan and provide strong support for our parishes.



# Section 5

# How do

# we do

# this?

## **Priority 1**

Practical steps to bring Encounter, Discipleship and Mission to life in parishes, schools and chaplaincy

## **Priority 2**

Practical steps to equip the laity to work alongside clergy in renewing parishes for mission

## **Priority 3**

Practical steps to equip and support our clergy as leaders and enablers of mission

## **Priority 4**

Practical steps to align diocesan and parish infrastructure and resources to serve mission



Good initial work has been done on each of the four priorities in many parts of the diocese, and we need urgently to build on that over the next five years. Clergy and laity have also indicated they would welcome suggestions around steps that could gradually be taken to implement each priority so that this can help to support and inspire local thinking and action. The rest of this section offers some of that input so it can inspire the prayerful development and implementation of local plans that take into account the unique starting point, opportunities and challenges of the many different parish, school and chaplaincy communities and groups across the diocese. The expectation is that every parish, school and chaplaincy will make steady progress over the next five years to develop and implement their local plan in alignment with the diocesan priorities.

# PRIORITY 1

## TAKE PRACTICAL STEPS TO BRING TO LIFE THE VISION FOR ENCOUNTER, DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION

There are many things we could do to pursue this priority! But the insights from our own parish and school communities, and others around the world, suggest some “helpful first steps” for each theme:



### FIRST STEPS

#### ● ENCOUNTER – EXPERIENCING GOD’S LOVE

- HELP people grow in prayer and in greater engagement with the Sacraments.
- OFFER opportunities to engage in prayer and the Sacraments.
- SIGNPOST further support to grow in prayer.

#### ● DISCIPLESHIP – SUPPORTING ONGOING CONVERSION

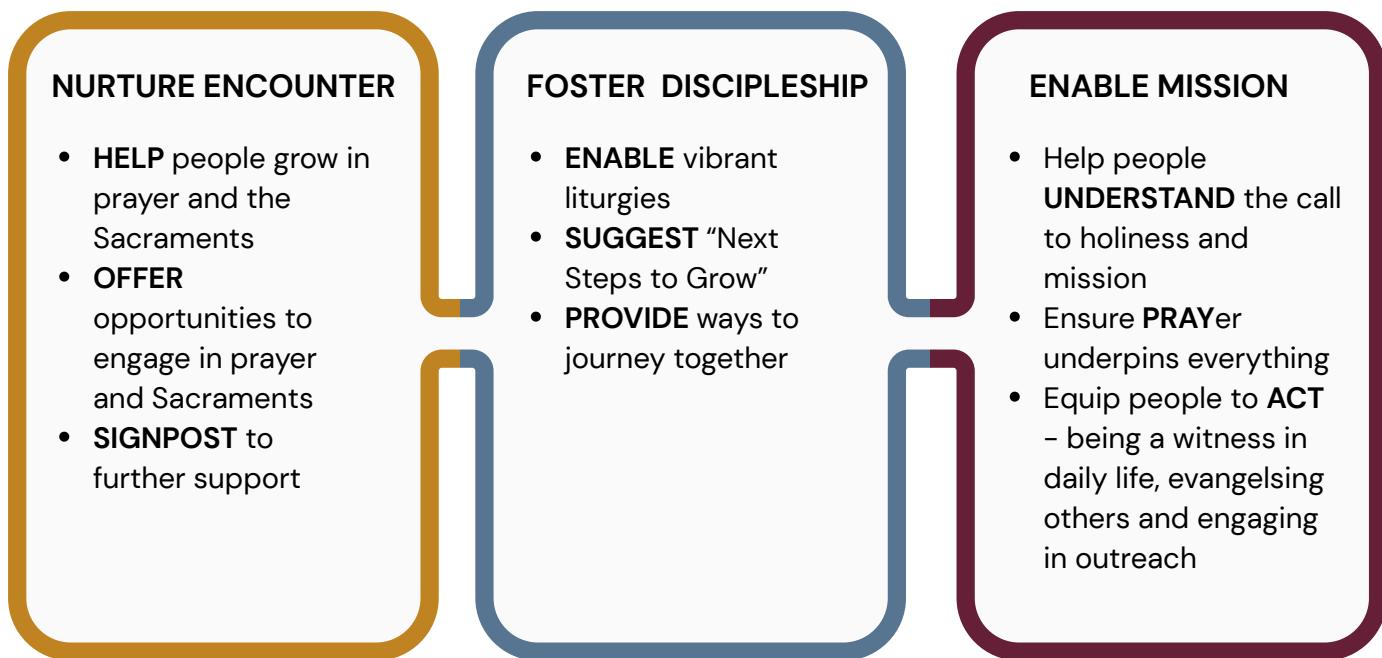
- Play our part to ENABLE PRAYERFUL AND REVERENT LITURGIES.
- SUGGEST “NEXT STEPS to grow” which help people go deeper in the understanding and practice of their faith.
- Provide ways to JOURNEY TOGETHER in the parish, school and chaplaincy, and in small groups.

#### ● MISSION – NURTURING WITNESS OF LIFE:

- Help people UNDERSTAND the call to holiness and mission.
- Ensure PRAYER underpins everything.
- ACT – equip people to:
  - give witness to their faith through their actions and words in their daily life.
  - evangelise in a group setting using a tool like Alpha or Sycamore.
  - evangelise one-on-one using an approach like Genesis Mission.
  - engage in practical outreach to meet the needs of the wider local community, for example by supporting a local food bank or Caritas project.



One way of summarising this is with the following simple diagram:



This will come to life in different ways for our parishes, chaplaincies and schools. Each of them is being encouraged to develop their own mission plan, aligned with the diocesan priorities. They may also wish to consider applying for funding from the Mission Enabling Fund to support local initiatives. When deciding what to do, it is helpful to have a working picture of the outcome you want to get to so this can inform your choices. The following sub-sections therefore start with a brief sketch of what we hope to achieve in each context and then outline some thoughts on practical ways to get started. In additional Appendices A, B and C provide some simple practical tools to help flesh out how the themes might come to life.

## PRIORITY 1

Take practical steps to bring to life the vision for Encounter, Discipleship and Mission



# I. Practical Steps for our Parishes

## A BRIEF SKETCH

For the parishes in our diocese, we want to build a future where:

- introducing parishioners and non-parishioners to a life changing relationship with Christ is a priority for the parish.
- parishioners of all ages look for an opportunity to share their faith with others.
- parishes provide and experience a high demand for faith formation opportunities.
- parishes provide opportunities for people of all ages to know God the Father's love, to have a personal relationship with Jesus and to experience the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit in the living out of their faith.
- there is a parish plan to ensure parish resources best serve the missionary purpose and priorities of the parish.
- parents and families are empowered as the primary faith educators of their children in collaboration with parish catechists and the school.
- the God-given gifts of parishioners are encouraged and used in service within the parish, in the wider local community, and in people's everyday lives.

*"The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach".*

# WAYS TO GET STARTED, OR TO DEEPEN STILL MORE, WHAT IS ALREADY HAPPENING:

- **Identify and describe where you want to get to**

Use the "Describing Our Destination" tool with a small or larger group to help your parish begin to describe where it wants to get to by 2030 (Appendix A).

- **Develop a plan**

Develop a plan for your unique context using the "Parish Ideas for Action Tool" (Appendix B) and the "Youth Ministry Ideas for Action Tool" (Appendix C) to identify what might work. These tools give parishes two helpful road maps for bringing the three spiritual themes to life in your unique context. You may wish to consider gathering a group of people who could make a meaningful contribution to a prayerful discussion on either the parish generally, or young people specifically (they don't have to commit to more than helping you think about things at the early stage).

- **Access bespoke support**

Draw on diocesan support for developing your parish plan and putting this into action. Consider booking a meeting with:

- the Diocesan Youth Service to help you create a bespoke strategy for youth ministry in your parish
- the Diocesan Adult Formation for Mission Department to help with developing and refining a parish wide plan.

- **Draw on existing resources**

- Join the diocesan mission online/ in person sessions to hear what other parishes are doing and get insights and practical help on a range of mission related topics (see "events" section of diocesan website for details).
- Access free help from ministries that have a proven track record of helping parishes: eg Alpha, Sycamore, Genesis Mission, Divine Renovation.

- **Access financial support for mission initiatives**

Consider applying for a grant from the Mission Enabling Fund for specific initiatives that help deliver one or more of the three themes. More details can be accessed here: [www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/mission-enabling-fund](http://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/mission-enabling-fund)



## PRIORITY 1

Take practical steps to bring to life the vision for Encounter, Discipleship and Mission



## II. Practical Steps for our Schools

### A BRIEF SKETCH

For the children and young people in our schools, we want to build a future where they will:

- understand more deeply the place of personal prayer, the scriptures, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and of public worship, especially the Mass and Adoration, in their relationship with God and in their service of others.
- grow in their understanding of what Christ is asking of them, a sense of vocation and of faith being lived out through social action; some will experience a call to be baptised, or to seek preparation for First Holy Communion and/or Confirmation.
- be helped to feel welcome and valued in their parishes for the skills and creativity they have.
- be supported in sharing with their peers something of their relationship with Jesus.
- become disciple-makers of their peers.
- become involved in the life and mission of their school and help to make it more outward-looking.
- be open to ongoing formation in their faith so that they have both the desire and the confidence to speak of Christ to others and to bear witness to Him in the way in which they live their daily lives.
- are able to hear and respond to God's call to holiness in their daily lives.

# WAYS TO GET STARTED, OR TO DEEPEN STILL MORE, WHAT IS ALREADY HAPPENING:

- **Consider building progress on the themes into performance reviews**
  - For CMAT CEOs: add a target goal around ensuring the building up of a strong, attractive and vibrant Catholic Life and Mission in all our schools
  - For Lay Chaplains in our schools: add an employee growth and development goal around providing good formation resources that help children and young people to grow in their personal understanding and living out in their lives of the diocesan spiritual themes: Encounter, Discipleship and Mission.
- **Equip the Lay Chaplains**
  - The Diocesan Education Service will offer ongoing formation (both in-person and online) for Lay Chaplains - with an emphasis on Encounter, Discipleship, Mission, good Catholic Worship, personal prayer and, a deeper understanding of the Eucharist and Eucharistic Adoration, of the scriptures and of Catholic Social Teaching; opportunities for Spiritual Direction and Pastoral supervision (where appropriate).
- **Nurture the school-parish connections**
  - School Lay Chaplains intentionally work more closely with appointed local priests to serve in schools and to develop outreach into parishes.
  - Parishioners are encouraged to be more open to assisting with school Chaplaincy provision and prayer, and to receive, welcome and encourage the involvement of young people in aspects of parish life.
  - Secondary schools and priests aligned to that school will meet in May/June each year with the headteacher and lay chaplains to plan the coming academic year's liturgical timetable so that regular provision can be made for Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, etc., and for school participation in parish life events such as the Feast of Christ the King (World Youth Sunday), etc.
- **Strengthen prayer, liturgy and Catholic life**

Provide support and opportunities for people to understand how the following can be places of encounter with Christ: Eucharistic Adoration, different ways of praying, the Mass and other sacraments as well as Scripture-sharing groups.
- **Join the dots between prayer and action**

Offer pupils/students specific formation on the close relationship between the Mass and outreach to others, along with concrete opportunities for outreach (school outreach initiatives, fundraising for CAFOD, Faith in Action Award, Youth SVP, and other charitable projects).
- **Co-ordinate efforts across organisations**

Help ensure a more integrated diocesan approach to the care and formation of children and young people involving the Education Service, Youth Service, CMATS, RE advisers and Vocations Office, so there is a shared approach to providing good teaching and ongoing formation resources.

## PRIORITY 1

Take practical steps to bring to life the vision for Encounter, Discipleship and Mission



### III. Practical Steps for young adults and those in University Chaplaincies

#### A BRIEF SKETCH:

For the Young Adults and those in University Chaplaincies in our diocese, we want to build a future where:

- introducing people to a life changing relationship with Christ is a priority for chaplaincies.
- young Adults will understand more deeply the place of personal prayer, the scriptures and public worship, especially the Mass and Adoration, in their relationship with God and in their service of others.
- they will grow in their understanding of what Christ is asking of them now and into the future (Vocation/Service of others).
- they will be helped to feel welcome, involved and valued in their parishes.
- they will be supported in sharing something of their relationship with Jesus and the place of the church in their lives, as Digital Missionaries to their peers and also in support of their parish communications.
- there will be an openness to ongoing formation in their faith so that they have both the desire and the confidence to speak of Christ to others and to bear witness to Him in the way in which they live their daily lives.
- they will hear and respond to God's call to holiness in their daily lives.

# WAYS TO GET STARTED, OR TO DEEPEN STILL MORE, WHAT IS ALREADY HAPPENING:

- **Consider building into performance appraisal progress on the 3 spiritual themes**  
For University Chaplains, Lay Chaplains and others offering support to young adults – add an appraisal priority around building up of a strong, attractive and vibrant Catholic Life & Mission for those in their care.
- **Offer ongoing formation (both in-person and online) to support Chaplains and others working with young adults**  
An emphasis on Encounter, Discipleship, Mission, good Catholic worship, personal prayer and, a deeper understanding of the Eucharist and Eucharistic Adoration, of the Scriptures and of Catholic Social Teaching; this will include opportunities for Spiritual Direction and supervision.
- **Better co-ordination of what is happening across the diocese**  
A more integrated approach to the care and formation of Young Adults will be undertaken which will involve the University Chaplains, diocesan support for Young Adults, the diocesan Youth Service and the Vocations Office – a shared approach to providing good teaching and ongoing formation resources.
- **Strengthen the capacity and role of the area young adult gatherings**
  - Diocesan help to support the creation of an organising team per area.
  - Each of the Area Young Adult gatherings across the diocese would offer a programme of monthly events for young adults to engage with the three spiritual themes.



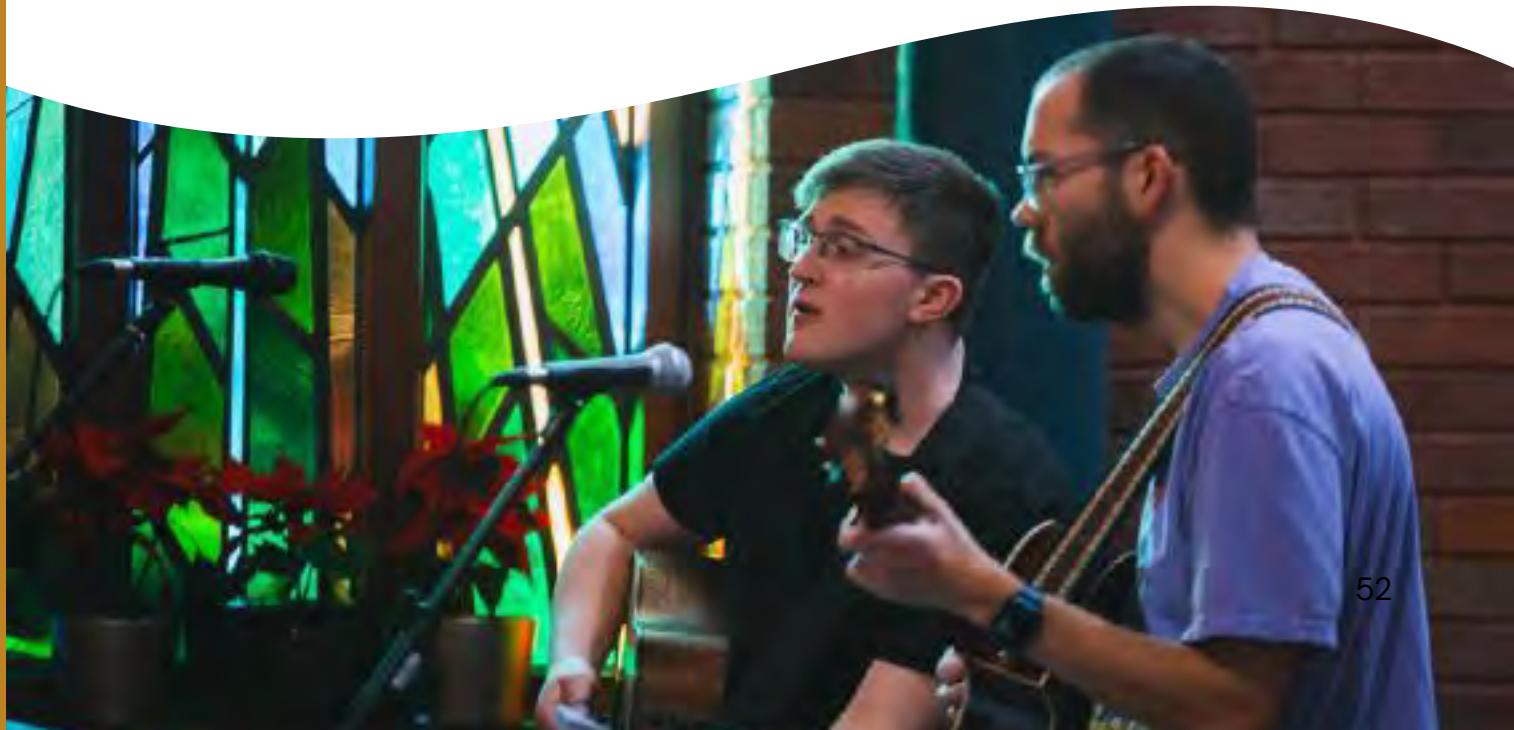
- **Offer different ways to engage in the three spiritual themes**
  - For example, chaplains and priests identify and facilitate opening up opportunities for Young Adults to be involved in parish and local social projects such as Street Pastors, Night Fever, Street Evangelisation, prison visiting, care for the homeless, March for Life, Justice and Peace groups, etc; faith being put into action and supported by prayer and liturgical life.
  - The diocese works towards offering a Young Adult Formation Programme with places for Young Adults each year.
  - The diocese offers communications training to enable Young Adults to be Digital Missionaries to their peers.
- **Pilgrimage Opportunities**

Pilgrimages such as the annual diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage, Walsingham Pilgrimage, and other diocesan or World Youth Day events are often life-changing and critical to the formation and growth of the faith in Young Adults; as such they will be prioritised by the diocese and will receive some support to enable them to participate.
- **Meaningful roles**

Parishes will ensure that realistic and meaningful roles for Young Adults, making best use of their gifts and the time available to them, are created and encouraged.
- **Young Adult community and support**

Young Adults supporting each other in parishes/local hubs through prayer, formation and recreation.
- **Partnerships**

Partner with ministries that have a proven track record in this space: the expectation will be of a close working relationship with Catholic Voices', 'Youth 2000', 'Jesus Youth', 'the Ascent' and other Catholic Young Adult groups, to provide the best available formation and support.





# PRIORITY 2

## EQUIP THE LAITY TO WORK ALONGSIDE CLERGY IN RENEWING PARISHES FOR MISSION



### A BRIEF SKETCH

**In our parishes, we want to build a future where lay men and women of all ages:**

- feel supported and are confident in bearing witness to Christ and Catholic values in their daily lives, and so help their parish to be both welcoming and invitational.
- understand what healthy orthodox co-responsibility with the clergy for mission looks like in the parish context, and so can be inspired and enabled to contribute their gifts to leading the change needed to bring the three spiritual themes to life in their context.
- belong to parishes where priests and lay leaders actively look for ways for lay people to contribute and regularly highlight and celebrate stories of what is being tried.
- understand the gifts and charisms they each bring are an essential contribution to the building up of the Body of Christ.
- are formed to work alongside priests and deacons to orient parish pastoral practice to mission, and so help make it more outward-looking, and more engaged with the wider local community.
- receive ongoing training and formation to support different ways of getting involved – for instance serving on a Parish Mission Leadership Team, helping in parish administration, playing a part in care of families, helping host a scripture study group or other small groups, accompanying people who wish to know more about Catholicism or returning Catholics (Alpha and Sycamore groups, RCIA, growing in faith groups, etc), serving as a Catechist.
- understand that a key part of their own role as lay leaders is to spot, develop, and mentor the next generation of potential leaders, especially among our youth.
- benefit from a clear parish planning process and a cycle of parish visitations (by the Bishop and Vicars General) to help foster momentum in implementing the Diocesan Mission Plan within each parish.

# How will this happen?

## Some initial practical steps include:

- **Helping laity understand the role they have to play in mission**

- Clergy can name and celebrate examples of where laity are already playing a role in the parish and share stories of what is happening across the diocese to help expand people's vision of what is possible. Over time this can be accompanied with an invitation to reflect on how God may have uniquely gifted each person to serve in different ways in the parish and even a personal invite to look at getting involved in a specific way.
- Where appropriate, priests may want to gather a small group of parishioners to pray and reflect on the different communities and gifts in the parish, where the Lord may be inviting them to act and letting the group propose a few things the laity would be willing to lead. One or two of these would then be chosen to try for a specific time period (e.g. 6 months or a year) with a "bias towards trying things" and taking measured risks.

- **Providing formation and support for leadership as needed**

- By Summer 2026 Central or Deanery formation will begin to be provided on how to set up and work with a Parish Mission Leadership Team; they will also suggest simple tools and approaches which clergy and laity can use to understand each person's gifts and help identify opportunities to work together as no one person has all the gifts or can do everything (for example the Strengths Finder Tool).
- By Summer 2026 there will be the beginning of provision for parishes to be linked to partners who can provide coaching or support with different kinds of parish mission leadership challenges (e.g. Divine Renovation for leading the overall move to mission; Alpha for how to raise up local leaders for an Alpha course, Sycamore for how to run simple small groups with off the shelf resources that help deepen faith, strengthen community and gently build parishioners skills in leading small groups).
- By Lent 2027 the Diocese will provide annual opportunities for Parish Mission Leadership Teams to come together to network, share insights and to be further equipped for mission. They will also share a list of examples of different ways in which laity and clergy are working together in parishes across the diocese so this can be a source of inspiration for others.

- **Helping leaders appreciate the importance of rooting all they do in prayer and mentor them in ways to do this**

This can take many different forms depending on the individual parish, ministry and leaders.

Some simple examples include:

- the clergy modelling this by including specific intentions in bidding prayers at Mass. helping leaders understand the importance of ensuring every meeting begins with prayer and mentoring them until they can comfortably and confidently lead that time of prayer themselves and start to help others do so also.
- ensuring leaders consistently think about "where is the prayer support" for whatever they do, and help identify and take practical steps to put this in place (e.g. asking rosary groups and the housebound members to pray for parish intentions, or by having a list of 'prayer requests' for times of Adoration).

## PRIORITY 2

Equip the laity to work alongside clergy in renewing parishes for mission



### ● Establishing the Structures

- By April 2026, the start of the new financial year, there should be a Finance Committee in every parish (cf Diocesan Parish Administration Manual).
- By Easter 2026 every parish should have an initial group working with the parish priest to identify the first steps it will take to bring the three spiritual themes to life in their unique context.
- By Advent 2026 every parish should have in place a Mission Leadership Team (to include where possible a Young Adult).
- Over time, parishes can expand this to include having a leadership pipeline for all their key ministries so existing leaders are intentionally identifying and raising up the next generations of leaders.
- In addition, each parish can look at its particular context to identify and start to create “shallow entry points” for people to get involved in ways that need limited initial time and equipping, but where they can grow over time.

### ● Creating and sharing an annual parish plan and a progress report

- Each parish (or parish group) will be invited to share with the Bishop a 2 page summary of the parish's plan to move forward on one or more of the four priorities over the next year along with the measures it will track to gauge progress (starting with the period July 2026–June 2027). A template will be provided to help with this.
- Continue to support progress against parish plans each year by means of an annual 2 page progress report.

## ● Establishing a Programme of Parish Visitations

To help build momentum in implementing the Diocesan Mission Plan, beginning in late Eastertide 2026, the Bishop and Vicars General will start a rolling two year programme of weekend visitations of parishes. Each visit will focus on encouraging and supporting parishes in implementing the Diocesan Mission Plan. It will look at the progress made so far, share insights from other parishes, identify common support needs, and highlight possible opportunities to apply to the Mission Enabling Fund. The dates of these visitations will be announced no later than the start of Lent 2026 and parishes will be visited in deanery groups.

### The shape of each parish visitation

- The weekend parish visit will include a time of Adoration to which everyone is welcome; a meeting with the Parish Mission Leadership Team and clergy to discuss the two page parish mission plan, any challenges, and thoughts for the coming year which might include applying for support from the Mission Enabling Fund for a specific initiative.
- As far as is logically possible, the Bishop or the Vicars General, will celebrate Mass and preach, or where there are several churches in the parish, preach a homily at some point in each Mass.
- The visitation will include a personal meeting with the Clergy.

### Preparatory work

- Two weeks ahead of its parish visitation, each parish group will draw up and email to the parish visitor a brief 2 page summary of how it is currently responding to one or more of the diocesan priorities and an overview of any specific opportunities or challenges should also be shared with the visitor and the Central Support Services.

### The Deanery dimension

- Parishes will be visited within their deanery grouping.
- Immediately before the first parish visitation there will be a deanery gathering of parishioners and clergy for a time of Adoration, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit upon the visitations of all the parishes in that particular deanery.
- Shortly after all the parish visitations in that deanery are concluded, there will be a Deanery gathering of parishioners and clergy to celebrate Mass and give thanks and share parish initiatives.

## ● Sharing and celebrating best practice in parish mission

- By Easter 2026 a periodic discussion and sharing of parish mission ideas will be built into the Agenda of Deanery meetings so that Deans can feed back parish progress in the Bishop's meetings with Deans and raise any concerns.
- By Lent 2027 a Diocesan Mission Group will have been formed, made up of a core group of parishioners and clergy and innovative mission to enable the sharing of creative ideas and good practice.
- Use occasions such as Diocesan Mission Group meetings, Clergy Conference and Ongoing Formation activities to share and celebrate what is working well in our diocesan context and any insights gained.
- Share stories of what parishes, schools and others are trying via internal diocesan communications and social media so that people can learn from each other.

# PRIORITY 3

## EQUIP AND SUPPORT OUR CLERGY AS LEADERS AND ENABLERS OF MISSION



### A BRIEF SKETCH

**We want to build a future for our clergy where there is:**

- less time spent by clergy on administration.
- more time available for the enabling of mission and discernment of what's working and what is not in parishes.
- greater clarity on the theology of co-responsibility and collaborating with laity.
- more time available for prayer, Spiritual Direction, priests' support groups and ongoing formation.
- more resources to enable regular Spiritual Direction, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Pastoral accompaniment or Counselling, going on Retreat and Days of Recollection.
- more formation offered, in response to what is identified by the clergy as being needed, eg, Spiritual Direction, theology of mission, time management, strategic planning, managing change, enabling Parish Mission Leadership Teams and other groups, mentoring of clergy, delegating responsibilities while not abnegating responsibility, identifying and supporting lay leaders, practically & spiritually, etc.
- more support so priests can better understand their own gifts and charisms and how these can work in collaboration with the gifts and charisms of the laity complemented by a willingness among both clergy and laity to take measured risks in terms of trying new ways of working together or new initiatives.

# How will this happen?

## Some initial practical steps include:

### ● **Freeing Priests up for Mission**

By Autumn 2026 Central Support Services (curia) will:

- have oriented their work to support the delivery of the three themes.
- continue to review and strengthen its structures, taking on more finance, property HR, safeguarding, and governance work, centrally.
- offer support for the formation of Lay Mission leaders, parish Administrators, Deanery Admin Hubs, those exercising the Ministries of Catechist, Readers, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, etc.

### ● **Offering formation for priests as leaders and enablers of mission**

From Summer 2026, plans will begin to be developed to offer clergy the best in-service training to enable them to become more confident in leading and enabling mission and in encouraging and facilitating greater co-responsibility for the evangelising mission of the Church.

### ● **Supporting priests in the development of Mission Leadership Teams**

Training and resources will be offered to priests to support them in establishing their initial working group to identify the first easy steps their parish will take to bring the three themes to life. Additional support will be available as priests begin to formalise their Mission Leadership Team and, in time, seek to identify and raise up the next generation of leaders. This is an iterative process and will be unique to each priest, parish and specific pastoral context.

From January 2026, priests will be:

- invited to attend the roadshow launch of the Diocesan Mission Plan with 2-3 parishioners who would be open to helping their parish become more missionary.
- asked to identify first easy steps and plans for 2026-27, by working with this initial group of people (and potentially others) and making use of the Tools in the appendices at the end of this plan which help not only in "describing your destination" but also help you identify where your parish is starting from and a couple of concrete steps you could take each year to move forward on Encounter, Discipleship and Mission.
- encouraged, with this initial team, to revisit and read Christifideles Laici (and other relevant Church documents) with fresh eyes and help continue to foster a robust, orthodox theology around co-responsibility and lay collaboration.

From April 2026, priests will be:

- supported, with their team, to begin to action these initial "easy steps" they have identified for their parish, with a "bias towards trying things" and taking measured risk.

- From Advent 2026, as this work gets underway and this group begins to move towards having a more formal Parish Mission Leadership Team, priests will be:
  - invited to learn more about Parish Mission Leadership Teams and their key principles, including through engaging with literature, videos and podcasts that explore the core concepts of such teams and the difference they can make (i.e. Divine Renovation, Amazing Parish, Rebuilt etc.).
  - supported to evolve their initial team, as needed, as they work together to take their easy first steps on the three themes. If helpful, this team could also connect with organisations such as Divine Renovation to access their Launch Point resource which helps bring to life what, longer term, a formal Mission Leadership Team is and helps with understanding how to identify and choose team members.
  - helped to identify, longer term, what additional kinds of support will best help their parish get a formal Parish Mission Leadership Team in place and take further steps in implementing the Diocesan Mission Plan. This will include help from the Adult Formation for Mission Department to better understand available resources (e.g. donor funded Genesis Compass from Divine Renovation; targeted Mentoring and Coaching from Divine Renovation).
- **Offering optional accompaniment for priests**
  - Continue to offer optional accompaniment for priests with the hope to create a culture, in time, where accompaniment becomes an integral part of their on-going formation and is viewed as a positive thing to opt into, one that supports their human and spiritual development. Such accompaniment looks at the “whole person” and not just aspects of priestly ministry.
  - Accompaniment is provided through the John Paul II Centre based at Oscott College, costs are a legitimate parish expense, participation as well as content is confidential.
  - Typically there will be monthly sessions for the first 6 months and then what follows to be arranged between priest and counsellor.
  - The JPII Centre offers different counsellors in different geographical locations, with different backgrounds, male and female, so that each priest can find a good fit.
  - Virtual, as well as face-to face, sessions are available where travel times might be a challenge.
  - There would be an expectation that those already in formation for priesthood would automatically continue with accompaniment post-ordination.
  - Through the Ad Clerum, priests will be reminded every 6 months of this optional accompaniment and encouraged to contact those who undertook the pilot scheme to discuss it in more detail.

Overview of the 2025 pilot scheme of this accompaniment programme.

In 2025 a small pilot group of priests began to undertake individual regular accompaniment sessions with counsellors who are registered with the John Paul II Centre based at Oscott College. The first feedback session took place in mid-October 2025; the priests involved identified a number of ways in which this was making a real difference to them, for example;

- Undertaking regular accompaniment to support priests in their ministry and for personal growth, isn't a luxury 'added extra' but is a vital integral part of healthy priestly ministry.
- clarity that, in an increasingly busy ministry, finding time for accompaniment isn't easy, but can be very necessary for effectively managing that busy-ness.
- recognition that a priest's ministry and his own personal life are not two separate 'roles' but are integrated and interwoven in his own unique personality.
- appreciation of the importance of encouraging priests to consider the benefits of accompaniment, that works well alongside spiritual direction in a confidential healthy environment.

Based on the success of the pilot, the programme will continue.



# PRIORITY 4

## ALIGN DIOCESAN AND PARISH INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES TO SERVE MISSION



### A BRIEF SKETCH

**As a diocese we want to build a future whereby:**

- the parish amalgamation programme is complete and our 54 parishes each have the resources, skills and people needed to thrive long term.
- each parish has the key structures it needs to flourish, including a Mission Leadership Team, Finance Committee, and Parish Administrator. These structures, and others, enable the ministry of our priests to be complemented by the gifts of committed and skilled lay people.
- The Deanery Hubs handle much of the finance, property, HR, safeguarding, and governance work, freeing priests and parish teams to focus on caring for people, sharing the Gospel, and building community.
- new spaces have been created for listening and sharing ideas about the Mission Plan, including a Youth Forum so young people can contribute their ideas and gifts.
- innovations from the Youth Service review mean parishes now receive clearer, more focused support to help young people meet Jesus and grow in faith.
- extra funding is available to support new and creative mission projects across the diocese.
- we continually improve diocesan systems and ways of working so they better support parishes and the Mission Plan.

# How will this happen?

## Some initial practical steps include:

- **Completing the parish amalgamation programme**

- Central Support Services (curia) will continue to support parishes through the amalgamation process with the goal of completing all amalgamations by Pentecost 2026.
- Clergy and lay leaders who have already been through this process will continue to share their experience and good practice.

- **Helping our parishes become sustainable**

By Pentecost 2026, the parish amalgamation programme will have helped us move to having 54 larger parishes, including 11 standalone parishes. The greater size of the amalgamated parishes will help sustainability in a number of ways:

- minimise duplication as parishes work together to serve a geographic area.
- help people to contribute more effectively by bringing together in each new, larger parish, one Pastoral Council, Finance Committee, and other former parish committees. This lets the community draw on a wider pool of gifts, opens these committees to new parishioners, and helps clergy make better use of their time.
- make it easier for new pastoral and missionary ideas to grow as there are more people, gifts and opportunities in each parish.

Between Pentecost 2026 and Pentecost 2028, all our parishes will receive support to gradually put further key structures in place to ensure long-term sustainability including:

- a formed Parish Administrator.
- a prayerful Mission Leadership Team of clergy and laity.
- closer links between parishes, schools, and chaplaincies where relevant.
- greater collaboration between parishes and the Diocesan Youth Service where helpful.

We also acknowledge the need for ongoing adaption and renewal of parish structures and resources to respond to the signs of the times in the decades to come:

- regardless of whether a parish undertakes a formal structural change or not, the need for spiritual renewal and mission remains if the future of these parishes is to be based upon growth rather than decline. Adapting our parish structures to enable us to share more effectively and viably in Christ's commission is a responsible act of good stewardship for present and future generations. It is recognised that these structural changes cannot be set in stone for perpetuity; future generations will need to make further changes to ensure that our parish and chaplaincy communities continue to be focussed on and well-resourced for mission.

## PRIORITY 4

Align structures and resources to mission

- **Developing Deanery Hubs**

To reduce administration work and free priests and parishes for mission, pilot Deanery Administrative Hubs were set up in late 2025. The aim is for these hubs to take on much of the finance, property, HR, safeguarding, and governance work. Based on the outcome of this pilot, we hope to create additional Hubs across the diocese.

- **Creating forums to support mission**

- By Summer 2026, work will begin on a Diocesan Youth Forum to listen to young people and give them a voice in shaping and delivering the Diocesan Mission Plan.
- By Lent 2027, a Diocesan Mission Group (DMG) will be put in place to bring together parishioners and clergy involved in creative outreach and innovative mission. This will enable the sharing of ideas, good practice, and perspectives on mission across the diocese.
- There will be ad hoc forums and other spaces which, from time to time, bring together different lay groups to share perspectives on key topics.

- **Strengthen Diocesan Youth Service support to parishes through delivery of the Innovations from the Youth Service review**

- Clergy are supported to develop, with a team, a parish youth ministry strategy.
- Parishes will be able to access support to recruit, grow, form and train volunteers to provide local youth ministry provision.
- By Summer 2026, a Youth Ministry Network is established to offer support, encouragement and share good practice.
- The Youth Service will work strategically to develop pathways, which include events and opportunities, to support young people to deepen their relationship with God, grow as disciples and be empowered as missionaries.

- **Continuing our fundraising campaign**

- Work will continue on the Enabling our Mission Fundraising Campaign which exists to encourage and help support the financing of parish mission initiatives.
- The campaign launched at the end of 2023 aims to raise £8 million by 2031. By the middle of December 2025, £4.113m had already been pledged. 75% of pledges received are eligible for Gift Aid.

- **Continuing to align the Central Support Services (curia) so teams, systems, and ways of working enable implementation of the Diocesan Mission Plan and offer greater support to parishes.**

#### Investing in people

- Work with parishes to develop a clear approach to supporting, training, and recognising our many volunteers.

#### Renaming and refocusing the diocesan curia

- Pope Francis taught that every Church structure must become more mission-oriented and focused on evangelisation (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 27). In that spirit, the curia is being renewed and renamed 'Central Support Services' (or simply Central Support), to underline its purpose as a servant of the Church's evangelising mission across the diocese.
- Strengthen Central Support teams so they are well-equipped and focused on supporting mission.

#### Developing better systems

- Complete the move to online finance, HR, and property systems to reduce workload and improve efficiency.
- Continue to pro-actively strengthen safeguarding processes and practice.

#### Ensuring good governance

- Regularly visit parishes to understand how the Mission Plan is being put into practice, offer support, and share good practice.
- Establish a Diocesan Mission Group to guide delivery of the Mission Plan.
- From 2026, all annual planning and budgeting will be shaped by the Mission Plan, with regular reviews to ensure we are learning and improving each year.

#### Enabling greater financial sustainability

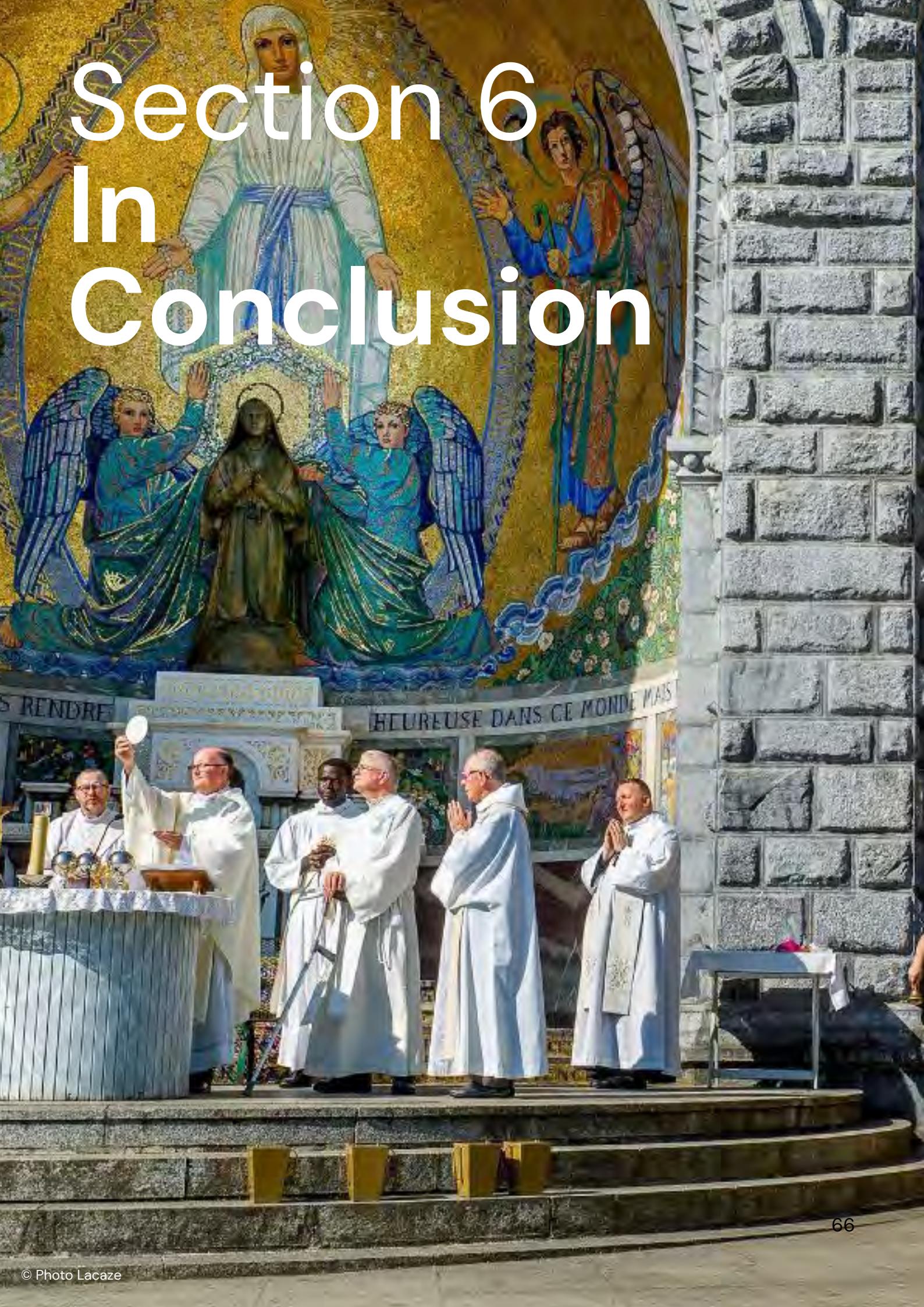
- Develop a long-term financial plan to support our five-year priorities and restore the diocese to a sustainable financial position. This includes making best use of our buildings, encouraging committed giving, growing income through fundraising and investment, and allocating budgets wisely.
- Continue to refine the diocesan levy so it is fair and reflects the different circumstances of parishes.

#### Communicating clearly

- Improve communication around how resources are used, making it clear, open, and easy to understand.
- Keep people informed about challenges, opportunities, and progress in implementing the Diocesan Mission Plan, building on the positive feedback received during roadshow consultations.

# Section 6

# In Conclusion





# In Conclusion

The ongoing renewal of our diocese, to make us more equipped for and engaged with mission over the next five years, 2026-2030, cannot be seen as just the responsibility of the parish clergy, a few committed parishioners, the Central Support Services (curia) and the Bishop. It requires the active participation and spiritual commitment of each and every one of us, in our parishes, chaplaincies, schools and Church organisations reaching out into our local communities, supported by the prayers of the Religious, the housebound and the retired clergy. Everyone, without exception, is required to play their part. St John Henry Newman, recently declared a Doctor of the Church for the quality of his teaching, expressed well the very particular role we each have:

*"God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission...Somehow I am necessary for His purposes...I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do His work".*

Each of us, by virtue of our baptism, has a unique role to play in the plan that God has for our diocese. This five year Mission Plan, 'Go make disciples' is an invitation therefore to place our God-given gifts, talents and prayers, at the service of that commission which Christ has given to each of us. It's an invitation to open ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit, the one who makes mission possible; to seek His guidance so that we may grow in

greater trust and confidence that, when we humbly, and perhaps at times hesitantly, share with other people the positive difference that knowing, loving and serving Christ makes to our lives, God will bless the little we feel we have to offer and will make it ever more fruitful in His service.

At the heart of this Mission Plan is renewal, a vision of what our diocese could look like if we seek ways to respond to Christ's commission, 'Go, make disciples', if we continually seek to become more outward-looking and missionary. This vision is not abstract or new. I shared with people the background and emerging framework for this Diocesan Mission Plan in 'The Story so far' (November 2024), an outline of my careful listening to people's accounts of good initiatives in our parishes, schools, Youth Service and Central Services (curia) over the last few years. This was further discussed with people across the diocese in the county Roadshows (February 2025). Together, clergy and laity, we reflected honestly on where we are as a diocese.

What emerged was not only a clearer picture of the challenges we face, declining attendance in many of our parishes, financial pressures, and the need for both spiritual and structural change to enable us to be more missionary. It also revealed a renewed sense of hope, purpose and shared responsibility. The feedback was rich, honest and constructive, and revealed a diocese that is already moving forward.

This is very evident in the generous commitment of clergy and laity finding creative ways to work together, particularly when parishes are amalgamated, in the creativity of our Youth Service, the willingness of the Central Support Services (curia) to adapt so as to be of yet greater service to parishes, and, above all, in the generosity of those who give of their time and giftedness to play their part in the mission entrusted to us all.

The reality is that some parishes, schools and other groups are already well underway. Others are keen to get going. Still others, particularly those involved in the process of amalgamation, may need to walk at a slower pace. Those already well under way will commit to the 'right next set of steps' for them. What is important that we all commit to take a 'first few steps' in the next twelve months, and then to making substantial progress on the journey to becoming more missionary by 2030. Each parish is asked to share with me, by 15 June 2026, its first few steps for the first year (1 June 2026 – June 2027) and then to share an annual progress update on the gradual implementation of its Pastoral Plan.

As we prepare to set out on this five-year journey to 'Go, make disciples', let us make our own that humble and trusting prayer of Cardinal Prevost as he came to the realisation that he was about to be elected our new Pope:

***'Here we go, Lord, you're in charge, you lead the way.'***

With prayers and gratitude for all the good work going on in our diocese, and in hope and expectation for all that the Lord desires to do in and through each of us over the next five years,



*+Patrick*

+Patrick  
Bishop Patrick McKinney



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# Appendix A

## "Describing Our Destination"

### **A tool for parishes**

Focusing on the three themes of Encounter, Discipleship and Mission will help us co-operate with the Lord in bringing new life to parishes and their surrounding communities. This tool is offered to help parishes prayerfully reflect on what they might wish to work towards by 2030. Schools, chaplaincies and other groups are encouraged to develop an equivalent for their own setting.

The table below sets out a "from/to" list describing some of the aspects of where a parish may find itself today and what the Lord is inviting it to become with the help of His grace. The list is not meant to be exhaustive! Each parish will vary in the details of how the three themes come to life in their unique context and there may be other items it is important to add. Parish priests may wish to consider gathering a group, or several groups, of people to prayerfully contribute to this conversation so that the "2030 picture" becomes a shared vision.

### **The following steps are a suggested way to get the most out of this tool**

1. Prayerfully consider the list of From and To items.
2. Take a highlighter pen and mark any of the "From" items which particularly apply to your situation AND which of the "To" items especially resonate.
3. Discuss whether there are any other items it would be helpful to add in for your unique context – if so, then please do add them in!
4. Discuss what it would look like if the picture sketched out by the items in the "to" column came to life in your parish – What resonates? What are people excited about? Are there any ways in which God is already acting? Is there anything that prompts hesitation, why?
5. Consider booking a meeting with the Diocesan Adult Formation for Mission Department if you would like more support.

<b>We are a parish community that...</b>	<b>We desire a parish community that...</b>
has parishioners with faith who go to church	has parishioners who gather as church and look for opportunities to share their faith with others
runs some programmes and activities for parishioners	also runs programmes and activities specifically for people not proactive in the life of the parish
celebrates, baptisms, 1st Holy Communions, Confirmations, Weddings and Funerals	looks upon these occasions as opportunities to cherish, evangelise and encourage people to become involved in the parish
has a number of parishioners who serve in parish programmes and activities	has a growing number of parish leaders who enthusiastically serve in parish programmes and activities
has parishioners who have a positive regard for the Church	has parishioners who see themselves as part of the Church on mission in the world
is a place where people can learn about Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit	provides opportunities for people to know God the Father's love, to have a personal relationship with Jesus, and to experience the guidance and encouragement of Holy Spirit
experiences growth through births, immigration and new local housing development	makes new disciples through personal outreach and invitation, prayerful worship and community events
has a website to keep parishioners informed of parish events, times of Masses and other liturgies	more intentionally makes use of its digital presence as a way to explain things, reach out to, and engage with, those who may wish to learn about Catholicism
receives some financial support from the majority of parishioners	receives generous financial support from the majority of parishioners who wish to support the parish mission and participate actively in it
has a very efficient Parish Safeguarding Representative(PSR)	Is committed to supporting our PSR so that everyone who comes to our church feels both welcome and safe
provides opportunities for faith formation which some parishioners attend	experiences a high demand for faith formation opportunities
has parishioners who routinely receive the sacraments	has parishioners who celebrate the sacraments with personal faith and spiritual expectancy

We are a parish community that...	We desire a parish community that...
offers a place where couples can marry	accompanies and supports engaged and newly married couples and those who have been married for longer
prays for more vocations to the priesthood and religious life	Is committed to both praying for vocations and actively encouraging young people to consider these vocations
is pleased to have a good connection with the parish school	works closely to develop ever stronger links between the parish and school
relies predominantly on the school and catechists to teach the faith to children	empowers parents and families as the primary educators of their children in collaboration with parish catechists and the school
allocates resources according to the most immediate needs of the parish	has a plan to ensure parish resources best serve the evangelising purpose and priorities of the parish
believes that most Mass attenders have a personal relationship with Jesus and shapes homilies, programmes and events accordingly	understands that many Mass attenders may not yet feel they have a personal relationship with Jesus and so shapes homilies, programmes and events accordingly
has parishioners who fulfil their duty to worship God	has parishioners who enjoy gathering to pray, listen, worship and be sent on mission
communicates using language parishioners can understand	communicates using language that both the initiated and uninitiated can understand
has some parishioners who, from time to time, might speak about their relationship with Jesus	equips parishioners to share with others their relationship with Jesus as a normal aspect of the life and outreach of the parish
has some ministries where parishioners can choose to serve	encourages the God-given gifts of parishioners and provides many opportunities for service
offers assistance to those who ask for it	provides support and a sense of belonging to everyone, especially the housebound, lonely, vulnerable and the marginalised
has social functions which some parishioners attend	has a variety of opportunities for people to gather together to deepen their communion and fellowship, and to reach out to others (the lapsed and those who show interest in becoming Catholics)
cares for the needs of those within the parish community	is seen as a community of love and care with a capacity to identify the needs of the local people <sup>72</sup> and to address them with love & faith

# Appendix B

## "Parish ideas for Action Tool"

### How to use this tool

This tool is to support you with a tried and tested road map to put the three spiritual themes into action in your unique context, taking into account the insights we already have on where to focus first. You may wish to consider gathering a group of people who could make a meaningful contribution to a discussion on the parish (they don't have to commit to more than helping you think about things at this stage).

### The following steps are a suggested way to get the most out of this tool

1. Print out the next two pages.
2. Take a highlighter pen and mark any of the things you are currently doing.
3. Prayerfully consider what your next two or three actions might be for the next 12 months or in preparation for your parish visitation by the bishop or one of the Vicar Generals.
4. Record initiatives in the white spaces on the second page.
5. Draw in support from the wider parish community.
6. Review progress and revisit the tool to choose your next actions at the end of the 12 months. The idea is to build momentum by adding in the next area of development.
7. Consider booking an "Action Plan meeting" with the Diocesan Adult Formation for Mission Department if you would like further support.

#### NURTURE ENCOUNTER

- **HELP** people grow in prayer and the Sacraments
- **OFFER** opportunities to engage in prayer and Sacraments
- **SIGNPOST** to further support

#### FOSTER DISCIPLESHIP

- **ENABLE** vibrant liturgies
- **SUGGEST** "Next Steps to Grow"
- **PROVIDE** ways to journey together

#### ENABLE MISSION

- Help people **UNDERSTAND** the call to holiness and mission
- Ensure **PRAYER** underpins everything
- Equip people to **ACT** – being a witness in daily life, evangelising others and engaging in outreach

## NURTURE ENCOUNTER

## FOSTER DISCIPLESHIP

## ENABLE MISSION

# FIRST STEPS

# NEXT STEPS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Get inspired:</b> see what other parishes are doing to nurture Encounter (e.g. see content on the diocesan Mission Lab or webinars from Word on Fire or Rebuilt)</li><li>• <b>HELP</b> use homilies and talks to explain WHY daily prayer matters including sharing real life examples and experience</li><li>• <b>HELP</b> preach regularly on the basic stages of the spiritual life and different ways of praying ("pray as you can, not as you can't");</li><li>• <b>OFFER</b> opportunities for people to participate in Mass, Reconciliation, Adoration (by better aligning and publicising timetables across a deanery);</li><li>• <b>SIGNPOST</b> direct people to simple resources to get going e.g. provide a 1 page handout outlining a simple approach for morning and night prayer; have a 1 page guide on "how to spend 15 minutes in Adoration" that people can take and try</li><li>• <b>PRAY</b> for the three themes explicitly each week e.g.: in the bidding prayers, at weekly Adoration, rosary group, scripture group, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Get inspired:</b> see what other parishes are doing to foster discipleship (e.g. see Divine Renovation or Sycamore webinars)</li><li>• <b>ENABLE REVERENT &amp; VIBRANT LITURGIES:</b> ensure basic up to date parish information is easy to find on and off-line</li><li>• <b>ENABLE REVERENT &amp; VIBRANT LITURGIES:</b> clergy set the example on welcoming; Parish runs "Name tag Sunday" every month so parishioners get to know people's names</li><li>• <b>ENABLE REVERENT &amp; VIBRANT LITURGIES:</b> establish a team of Welcomers for 1 Sunday Mass (listen to Mission Lab webinar on Welcoming)</li><li>• <b>ENABLE REVERENT &amp; VIBRANT LITURGIES:</b> Homilies – Preachers invest in growing as a preacher through study (e.g. 'Preaching on Purpose' book), seeking regular feedback from parishioners</li><li>• <b>SUGGEST NEXT STEPS:</b> help the laity recognise home life and work as their sharing in the Mission of Christ through preaching and formation (e.g. reading group on Vatican document – Christifideles Laici)</li><li>• <b>JOURNEY TOGETHER:</b> offer simple ways to grow as a parish community – celebrating the patronal feast day; summer BBQ/ social events; Advent wreath making. Always starting with prayer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Get inspired:</b> read or watch videos/ podcasts about what mission can look like in a parish setting (e.g. diocesan Mission Lab webinars; podcasts from Divine Renovation)</li><li>• <b>UNDERSTAND:</b> help people understand the call to holiness and mission e.g. reflect on the Scripture passages like Woman at the Well (Jn 4:5-30) or Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20); read books like Divine Renovation or Forming Intentional Disciples (Mission Deck Beige &amp; Light Blue cards give more ideas)</li><li>• <b>UNDERSTAND:</b> give examples in homilies of giving witness in actions and words</li><li>• <b>PRAY:</b> start to underpin mission with prayer e.g. by including in bidding prayers or as an intention during parish rosary (Mission Deck Dark Blue cards give more ideas)</li><li>• <b>ACT:</b> suggest simple ways to get started in sharing faith such as lend a book on faith to a friend, re-share the link to a Catholic resource on social media with others in your network (Mission Deck Cream cards give more ideas)</li><li>• <b>ACT:</b> create simple "ways in" that are easy for parishioners to invite others to e.g. short carol service, lunch group, social occasions, church Open-Day with newcomers &amp; guides</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>HELP:</b> offer formation courses on prayer (e.g. Sycamore Prayer course, Catholic Christian Outreach 'Learn to Pray')</li><li>• <b>HELP:</b> encourage prayer in the family with concrete suggestions on what this could look like;</li><li>• <b>HELP:</b> provide micro-catechesis during the celebration of Mass and Reconciliation as well as Adoration to deepen people's understanding</li><li>• <b>OFFER</b> simple opportunities for different types of prayer in the life of the parish (e.g.: "taster session" introducing the Rosary, Angelus, Lectio Divina) and invite people to come</li><li>• <b>OFFER</b> opportunities to experience different formats for example for Adoration (guided, silent, child friendly..)</li><li>• <b>SIGNPOST:</b> suggest existing high quality resources (e.g. Hallow app, Pause app, Bible in a Year book or app, local or deanery retreats);</li><li>• <b>PRAY</b> for the three themes; establish intentional, ongoing intercession e.g. recruit sick/housebound &amp; religious as intercessors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>ENABLE REVERENT &amp; VIBRANT LITURGIES:</b> attend Diocesan Formation provided to support parishes e.g. Liturgy Group, catechists training</li><li>• <b>ENABLE REVERENT &amp; VIBRANT LITURGIES:</b> offer hospitality after one Sunday Mass, then extend to other Masses over time (and start off by having the team pray for all those they will meet that Sunday)</li><li>• <b>ENABLE REVERENT &amp; VIBRANT LITURGIES:</b> assess what's working/what's not with music and start to address including providing local or external formation for musicians and ensuring they pray, as well as play, together</li><li>• <b>SUGGEST NEXT STEPS:</b> laity have concrete roles beyond Sundays; identify possible roles and trial one idea</li><li>• <b>SUGGEST NEXT STEPS:</b> identify specific formation needs and use pre-packaged resources to respond (e.g. age-appropriate formation for children; helping teens and twenties to discover their gifts and discern God's call in their life; support the laity in living their vocation at work; marriage support; equipping parents in their vocation; for senior citizens support in facing old age and dying). The Diocese can suggest resources.</li><li>• <b>JOURNEY TOGETHER:</b> consider offering opportunities for time limited small groups (e.g. for Lent, Eastertide, Advent) ensuring these have an element of prayer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>UNDERSTAND:</b> pick additional ways to deepen people's understanding of their call to holiness and mission e.g. explore key church documents, visit another parish (Mission Deck Light Blue and Beige cards give more ideas)</li><li>• <b>UNDERSTAND:</b> join webinars/podcasts on topics relevant for your parish (e.g. Youth Alpha webinars, Genesis Mission 'The Encounters' podcast) or attend a diocesan gathering <b>PRAY</b> for evangelisation e.g. inviting people to set an alarm to pray daily this week for upcoming evangelisation initiatives</li><li>• <b>ACT:</b> consider ideas like NightFever, the Jesus challenge prayer journal. What might work for you? (Mission Deck Cream and Green cards give more ideas)</li><li>• <b>ACT:</b> start to offer a parish based adult evangelisation programme (e.g. Alpha, Sycamore, The Rescue Project) Consider starting off as a guest at another parish, then run a small "pilot" before growing over time. Diocesan team can help you access the free help available!</li><li>• <b>ACT:</b> offer training on how to share testimony and safe spaces to practice e.g. food bank donations</li><li>• <b>ACT:</b> offer simple opportunities for one-off social action e.g. food bank donations</li></ul>

# FURTHER STEPS

- **HELP:** offer opportunities to take part in initiatives such as a week on Guided Prayer (with support from the Jesuit Institute to run this in your parish)
- **HELP:** empower people to lead their peers in prayer through intentionally creating opportunities for them to do so and supporting and equipping them with training, resources
- **OFFER:** have people share their experience of the difference a daily prayer life is making for them (e.g. in the parish newsletter or in a small group setting)
- **SIGNPOST** ways forward: making readily available on parish websites where people can access good quality Spiritual Direction or accompaniment (e.g. from the Jesuits, Carmelites or local orders)
- **PRAY** for those coming into the church - introduce prayer sponsors e.g. parishioners invited to take a prayer card and commit to say a short prayer daily for a month for RCLIA candidates

- **ENABLE REVERENT & VIBRANT LITURGIES:** parishes in each deanery organise joint liturgical and formation events and share good practice with regard to catechetical programmes and sacramental preparation
- **SUGGEST NEXT STEPS:** offer opportunities for people to engage with the "hot topics" around Catholic teaching through a one-off session on a current topic or consider inviting Catholic Voices to run a parish or deanery level workshop
- **SUGGEST NEXT STEPS:** offer people the opportunity to engage in a longer programme of more intentional discipleship e.g.: working through the Catholic Christian Outreach faith studies series or several modules of Sycamore
- **JOURNEY TOGETHER:** consider offering a "buddy" system to help newcomers to the parish get connected in their first 3 or 6 months
- **JOURNEY TOGETHER:** consider offering opportunities for ongoing small groups (e.g. Milan Cell Groups, Steubenville Quads)

- **UNDERSTAND:** consider having a parish mission that will help to continue to deepen people's understanding of their call to holiness and mission
- **UNDERSTAND:** consider attending conferences and events to hear what other parishes are doing (e.g. diocesan events, Catholic national gatherings; Alpha's annual Leadership Conference..)
- **PRAY** for evangelisation e.g. sharing stories of the importance of praying for those we seek to reach through evangelisation; having a time of Adoration to intercede for guests at a parish evangelisation programme
- **ACT:** normalise people sharing their faith story/testimony: create opportunities for people to share their faith story/testimony with their peers and the wider parish and support them in doing so. Celebrate the small and big successes of faith development (e.g. giving anonymised examples in a homily or newsletter)
- **ACT:** consistently run a parish based adult evangelisation programme at least twice a year with the aim to have a increasing percentage of guests from outside the church and under 40 years of age
- **ACT:** equip people for 1:1 evangelisation (e.g. using tools like Genesis Mission, Catholic Christian Outreach's Ultimate Relationship Guide or Dave Ferguson's B.L.E.S.S. book)
- **ACT:** offer opportunities to get involved in larger social action initiatives e.g. Street Pastors, March for Life, Street Evangelisation, working with a Caritas team or local SVP conference to set up a longer term outreach programme (e.g. Summer reading and food project; becoming a warm spaces hub)

# WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

## ENABLE MISSION

## FOSTER DISCIPLESHIP

## NURTURE ENCOUNTER



# Appendix C

## **“Youth Ministry Ideas for Action Tool”**

### **How to use this tool**

This tool is to support you with a tried and tested road map to raise the profile of young people and develop parish youth ministry for 11-18 year olds in your unique context. It complements the ideas in the “Parish Ideas for Action Tool” but focuses specifically on youth. You may wish to consider gathering a group of people who could make a meaningful contribution to a discussion on young people (they don’t have to commit to more than helping you think about things at this stage).

### **The following steps are a suggested way to get the most out of this tool**

1. Take a highlighter pen and mark any of the things you are currently doing.
2. Prayerfully consider what your next two or three actions might be for the next academic term.
3. Draw in support from the parish community.
4. Review progress and revisit the tool to choose your next actions at the end of each term. The idea is to build momentum by adding in the next area of development .
5. Consider booking an “Action Plan meeting” with Youth Services to help you create a bespoke strategy for your parish and support you with putting it into action.

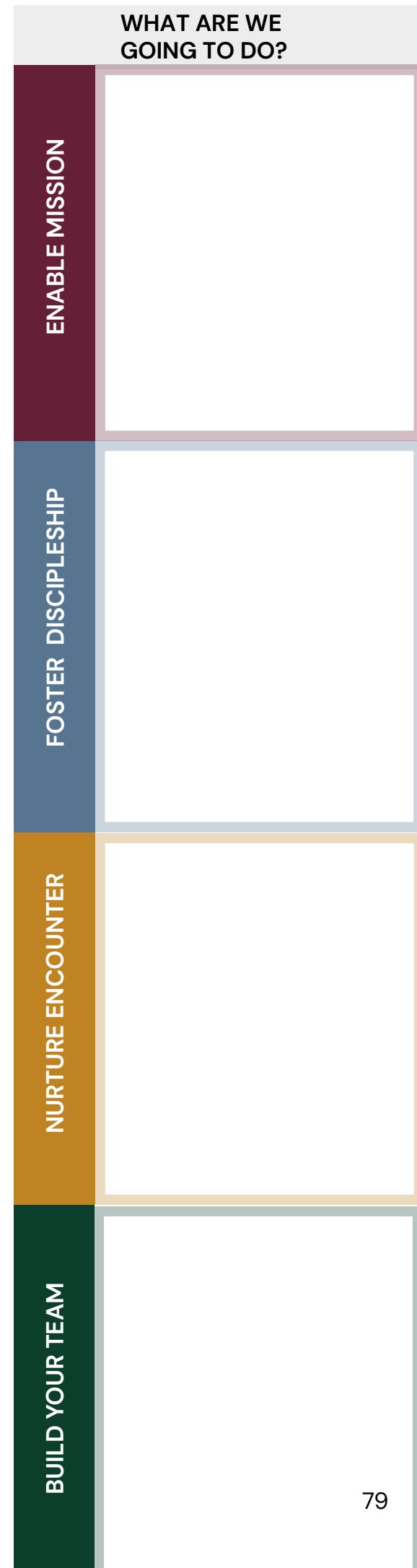
## FIRST STEPS

## NEXT STEPS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Get inspired:</b> join the youth ministry network meetings for ideas, good practice and inspiration</li> <li><b>Understand local needs:</b> gather young people's input on what they need using the simple survey from Youth Services and identify possible local partners (e.g. schools, universities, Caritas) with the "Partners Map"</li> <li><b>Get to know your young people by name:</b> consider having a regular "Name Tag Sunday" and encourage key parish leaders to invest in getting to know your young people</li> <li><b>Start to build your youth ministry team:</b> identify 3-5 adult volunteers to help you get going on first steps like accompanying young people to events (e.g. an open retreat at the Briars or the Lourdes pilgrimage) and send the adults on the free "Get Started" training run by Youth Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Pray for young people</b> intentionally and explicitly each week e.g., in the bidding prayers, at a weekly Adoration, rosary group, etc</li> <li><b>Help young people to start praying:</b> preach on the importance of prayer and point them to practical resources (e.g., simple 1 page guide, Hallow app)</li> <li><b>Offer opportunities for different types of prayer</b> in the parish e.g., Adoration, Taizé prayer or the Rosary to which young people are invited explicitly</li> <li><b>Enable young people to attend at least one event a year</b> that nurtures their existing relationship with Christ Jesus e.g. Deanery Retreat Day (with financial support, adults to take them etc.)</li> <li><b>Make young people visible in concrete roles</b> on Sundays: identify 3 simple ways young people can serve on Sundays (e.g., readers, hospitality, taking up collection, bringing up gifts; altar servers, music) – make it simple for them to get started – offer practical support and guidance to build confidence on "what to do when" – and celebrate and thank them for their contribution</li> <li><b>Enable young people to serve</b> in practical ways in the life of the parish e.g., serving tea and coffee after Mass- affirm and celebrate their contribution</li> <li><b>Create a safe space for questions</b> within parish life for young people to explore their faith without judgement or assumptions (e.g. as part of Confirmation prep offer a "teaching Mass" or an "Ask Me Anything" session with an opportunity to pre-submit questions anonymously)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Offer further training to your adult volunteers</b> through the in person training days being offered by Youth Services</li> <li><b>Work with your adult team to identify 2-4 events which would be a good fit for the young people in your parish</b> using the Youth Services Event list and plan how you will advertise this, offer individual invitations and organise a group to go (e.g. the Altar Servers retreat, Fiat weekend for 11-14 year olds, the Lourdes Pilgrimage for over 16's)</li> <li><b>Review whether a seasonal young adults group could work for your parish or deanery</b> (e.g. meeting for 3-4 weeks during Lent or Advent or after Confirmation). (Youth Services can suggest resources and practical points to consider)</li> <li><b>Book a "next steps" workshop</b> and work with your volunteers and experienced youth ministers to plot out a bespoke plan for your conference</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Make young people visible in concrete roles beyond Sundays:</b> identify additional roles for young adults and trial 1-2 concrete ideas (e.g. catechists, Youth Alpha teams; Sycamore group leads)</li> <li><b>Regularly offer young people simple opportunities to reflect where God is at work in their life.</b> "Glory stories" could become a regular feature at a youth group or prayer meeting</li> <li><b>Use pre-packaged discipleship resources to offer short sets of formation</b> for 11-18 years old in individual or small group settings e.g. Sycamore, Y Disciple (kerygma + hot topics such as youth and mental health), Life Teen resource; Word on Fire schools content. These can be offered as follow up to Confirmation or part of a summer camp</li> <li><b>Equip Parents to accompany their teens</b> through offering programmes such as Parenting Teenagers</li> </ul>

# FURTHER STEPS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Facilitate spiritual accompaniment and supervision support</b> for members of the parish youth ministry team who are accompanying young people</li> <li><b>Grow young leaders</b> by identifying and inviting a younger set of Youth leader(s) for parish based youth ministry, grown and developed from parish's own internal programmes</li> <li><b>Review whether a regular young adults group could work for your parish or deanery.</b> If so, start with a 3 or 6 month trial (Youth Services can suggest resources and practical points to consider)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Pray for young people</b> – introduce prayer sponsors e.g. parishioners invited to take a prayer card and commit to say a short prayer daily for a month for young people preparing for Confirmation, coming up to GCSEs, A levels or choosing their next step post school</li> <li><b>Empower young people to lead their peers in prayer</b> through intentionally creating opportunities for them to do so and supporting and equipping them with training, resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Young people take on appropriate volunteer roles</b> e.g. students who require work experience, volunteer or community service hours or take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program could be invited to complete the required hours serving within the parish community</li> <li><b>Offer young people the opportunity to engage in a longer programme of intentional discipleship</b> e.g., participating in the Ascent (3-year programme – weekly online + 3x residential a year)</li> <li><b>Offer opportunities for 11-18s to engage with the "not topics" around Catholic teaching</b>, for example through a Catholic Voices workshop for a deanery</li> <li><b>Regularly offer parish events focused on needs of young people</b> e.g. "Choosing your College Course or Career" 2 evenings with local Catholics giving a sense of what they studied or what it is like to do their job; "Figuring out what I'm meant to do with my life" vocations workshop – lots of ways to do this but one option could be to use the Sycamore content</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Normalise young people sharing their testimony:</b> Create opportunities for young people to share their testimony with their peers and the wider parish and support them in doing so</li> <li><b>Support 16-18 year olds in leading YouthAlpha or Sycamore type programmes in the Parish for their peer groups</b></li> <li><b>Offer opportunities to get involved in larger social action initiatives</b> e.g. working with Caritas Youth Social Action team to set up and run a local project, work with local SVP Conference or support a food bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Normalise young people sharing their testimony:</b> Create opportunities for young people to share their testimony with their peers and the wider parish and support them in doing so</li> <li><b>Support 16-18 year olds in leading YouthAlpha or Sycamore type programmes in the Parish for their peer groups</b></li> <li><b>Offer opportunities to get involved in larger social action initiatives</b> e.g. working with Caritas Youth Social Action team to set up and run a local project, work with local SVP Conference or support a food bank</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?</b></p>



# Appendix D

## Data sources

### 52% of people are of no religious affiliation

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey (1983–2018) – <https://faithsurvey.co.uk/uk-christianity.html>

### More than 80% of UK Catholics aged 16–29 do not attend mass weekly

Source: (Europe's Young Adults and Religion (English) – Prof. Stephen Bullivant <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2018-mar-europe-young-people-report-eng.pdf>

### For every 1 Catholic convert there are 10 cradle Catholics who leave

Source: "Contemporary Catholicism in England and Wales: A statistical report based on recent British Social Attitudes survey data – Prof. Stephen Bullivant <https://faithsurvey.co.uk/download/catholicism-report.pdf>



# Key Diocesan Contacts

## Adult Formation for Mission

adult.formation@dioceseofnottingham.uk

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/departments/formation-for-mission>

## Caritas and Justice & Peace

caritas@dioceseofnottingham.uk

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/departments/caritas-and-justice-peace>

## Communications

communications@dioceseofnottingham.uk

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/departments/communications>

## Education Service

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/departments/education-service>

01332 293 833

## Mission Enabling Fund

MET@dioceseofnottingham.uk

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/mission-enabling-fund>

## Safeguarding

safeguarding@dioceseofnottingham.uk

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/departments/safeguarding>

0115 953 9849

## Vocations

vocations@dioceseofnottingham.uk

religious@dioceseofnottingham.uk

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/vocations>

## Youth Services

enquiries@ndcys.com

<https://www.ndcys.com>

01773 852044

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk>

Registered Charity Number 1134449

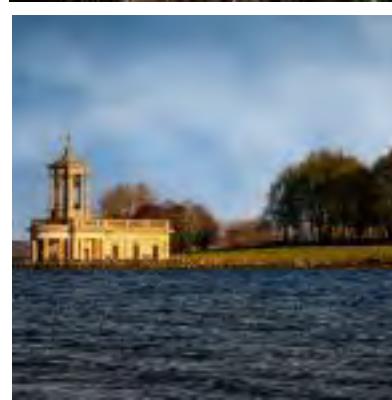
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Encounter



Discipleship

