

You are Living Stones

Diocesan Consultation on Parish Renewal

The Purpose of this Consultation:

As members of Christ's Body, the Church, we are all living stones. Bishop Malcolm has invited all of us, in every parish, school and community in our Diocese, to take part in a consultation called *You are Living Stones*, which has got three aims:

1. To provide information about the way the number of priests working in the Diocese has changed and will change over the next few years.
2. To provide a framework for people to look with a critical eye at their own parishes and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and to think about their own involvement in the life of the Church.
3. To promote organic growth of co-operation within parishes and between parishes, and to promote in a particular way the lay apostolate within parishes.

Some Principles underlying this Consultation:

- ◆ The Church is the People of God, a communion of believers; each of us is called to proclaim the Gospel, offer ourselves in worship and serve our brothers and sisters in our daily lives. We should minister the Gospel in our proper way, centred on Christ who comes to us in Word and Sacrament.
- ◆ We join this faith community through Baptism, we spread the Gospel through faithful witness strengthened by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, and we build and are nourished in the community by the Eucharist. These three sacraments of Initiation are our foundation blocks as Christians.
- ◆ We are all parishioners, and at the heart of this consultation is prayerful recollection — both as individual Christians and as a community of believers; we discern the needs of our community through prayer, time spent with God.
- ◆ We are called to take an active part in the Church in virtue of our Baptism, and we value, promote and support vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.
- ◆ We are a community of faith, demonstrating the love of God and rooted in the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ's abiding presence and glorious coming and professing our faith in our daily lives. We are not about managing decline, but celebrating the presence of God and bringing his Good News to the world, especially those with whom we live, because we are a missionary people.

In his introductory letter to *You are Living Stones*, Bishop Malcolm said: 'Over the next year, I want us to reflect on how we will support each other as communities in the years to come when we will have to face a falling number of priests able to serve in the Diocese. It is my intention, as best as I can as your Bishop, to ensure that each Eucharistic community in the Diocese has access to a weekly Mass. It is not my intention to close churches and disperse communities; that would be counter-productive to what we aim to achieve. I want us to work together to make sure that everyone, with that generosity of spirit, shares their talents and skills to ensure that each Eucharistic community is able to survive as part of the living Body of Christ, living stones, of our Diocese.'

You are Living Stones is a forward-looking consultation, asking us how we can build up the Body of Christ. We each have a part to play in our parish, Diocese and Church. To read the full consultation document, please ask your parish priest for a copy or download it from the diocesan website: www.nottingham-diocese.org.uk



RENEWAL



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(2 Pet 1:5)

Some Facts about our Diocese:

The Diocese of Nottingham is the largest Diocese in England & Wales in terms of area. It is divided into 108 parishes, which are grouped into thirteen deaneries. We have 155 places of worship and 85 maintained schools. Each parish is a community of believers united with its parish priest, even if it shares him with another parish. Here are some facts and figures to help us look at our past, present and future:

In 1993	In 2011	Projected figures:
112 parishes	108 parishes	2015
138 priests in active service:	94 priests in active service:	Best case: 80 priests Worst case: 62
75+ 3	75+ 12	2020
65+ 23	65+ 24	Best case: 72 Worst case: 44
55+ 43	55+ 28	
45+ 35	45+ 22	
35+ 22	35+ 8	
25+ 12	25+ 0	

Moving Forward:

- ◆ **Fewer parishes will have a resident priest:** a parish may have to share a parish priest with other parishes, and work together under his pastoral care.
- ◆ **Some smaller parishes may have a resident priest with extra responsibilities:** a parish may have its own priest, but he only works there 'part time' because he has a diocesan responsibility or a chaplaincy.
- ◆ **'Team ministry':** a number of priests may live together in one presbytery to care for a large parish with more than one church.
- ◆ **Using other buildings:** In some parishes, if the church building cannot be maintained properly, it may have to be closed and the parish share a building with other Christian communities (or they may use our buildings).

But this is not about priests, it is about PARISH COMMUNITIES: Priests do not 'run' parishes single-handedly; rather, in everything they do, they call together the People of God and build up the Church by the preaching of the Gospel, the celebration of the liturgy & sacraments and service of their parishioners. Lay involvement in every aspect of parish life has increased since the Second Vatican Council, and permanent deacons play an important role. But each of us must ask ourselves a fundamental question: **what role will I take on to help my parish to flourish?**

- ◆ **What can I do?** How can I help my parish? Am I happy to turn up and watch someone else do all the work? What's going to happen if there is no 'someone else', or no resident priest?
- ◆ **In what ways can my parish work with my neighbouring parish?** This could include RCIA, catechesis, sacramental preparation, parish ministry training, safeguarding training, pre-marriage courses, developing shared chaplaincy commitments in schools, universities, hospitals & prisons, SVP & other forms of outreach and other groups.
- ◆ **What are the strengths and weaknesses of my parish?** What are my hopes and fears for its future? How does my parish reach out to the wider community, because we are called to walk with those who are on the fringes of the Church and society. What about my family, my parish's schools, those who are 'resting' as Catholics and those who are thinking about joining our Church? Where is the Holy Spirit leading us?

Your views are needed about your parish, its future and how you can help and be helped to sustain your life of faith in the future! Your voice counts!



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