

THE
WORD
WHO
IS
LIFE

The Pastoral Plan:

A look to the future
in a Post-Pandemic Setting

2022

“THE WORD WHO IS LIFE”

A look to the future in a Post-Pandemic Setting

1. Introduction

“Something which has existed since the beginning,
that we have heard,
that we have seen with our own eyes;
that we have watched
and touched with our hands:
the Word, Who is Life –
this is our subject.”¹

- 1.1 It is now over three years since the publication of the Pastoral Plan for the Diocese. That first document was the fruit of a process of consultation across the Deaneries of the Diocese and the Plan was presented in each Deanery. In the intervening time, a number of positive developments have taken place. However, we have also been living with the Covid-19 pandemic for nearly two of those years and this has impacted significantly on every aspect of our lives.
- 1.2 The Word Who is Life is our subject, and the Mission of living and proclaiming the message of Salvation must be the focus for our every action, the measure by which we reflect upon our lives as the community of the Church.
- 1.3 **I therefore take this opportunity to invite everyone in the Diocese – lay faithful and religious, deacons and priests – to join with me in forging our parishes into communities of saints, into strong, lively and welcoming schools of discipleship. May they be communities where the Lord is known and loved; where the liturgy is experienced as an encounter with the wonder of heaven; where daily prayer is a natural part of life; where all are welcomed and their dignity as children of God always recognized; where young people grow in deep love for the Gospel, for the sacramental life of the Church and for prayer; where all know the riches of the faith and seek to share it with others.**
- 1.4 The message of the Gospel and a life truly lived in conformity with Christ make us witnesses to the One who is utterly attractive. Now is the time for us to take up this way of life as never before – not just for our own salvation, but the salvation of those whose lives we touch.
- 1.5 An authentic response to this invitation in the lives of each one of us, each according to our state in life, will make our personal witness authentic. Our parish communities will become ever-brighter beacons of faith.

1. 1 Jn.1:1.

2. The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

- 2.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a very significant impact on the lives of everyone in the Diocese. It has brought about the loss of loved ones and the grief that results; increased pressure on those who work in essential services, notably the NHS; challenges for all who study and work in our schools; uncertainty for students facing major examinations; loss of income for many, unemployment for a significant number, and the financial burdens and pressures on family life that result.
- 2.2 Our parish communities have responded with energy to the challenges of the pandemic, with the provision of livestreaming developing exponentially; the development of new ways of engagement in catechesis and prayer and many other initiatives in outreach to those most affected by the pandemic. The pastoral care offered to those in hospitals, care homes and at home has been wonderful. Our diocesan Formation Team, especially through Invited, deserves particular thanks for the formation in discipleship that has taken place in these difficult times.
- 2.3 Recent months have seen people able to return to the celebration of Mass in our churches and to renewed engagement in parish activities, but the return has taken place slowly and there is a concern that some will remain distant from the life of the parish community and the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments.
- 2.4 Parishes and the central operation of the Diocese have been affected in a serious way by reduced income and it will be a long time before we see recovery in the economic situation across the Diocese. This reality impacts on Mission and in the event that the economic climate takes a very long time to recover, it may prove necessary for serious thought to be given to the way in which financial resources might be shared.
- 2.5 However, the picture is not one of universal gloom. We have learned many lessons in these recent times that will serve the Mission of the Diocese in the future, and the Church is at a 'golden moment' in the work of evangelisation as so many people are seeking their way in the wake of the pandemic.
- 2.6 While it may be natural to speak about the 'return to normal', we must not imagine that the new 'normal' will be the same as in times past. The future should not simply be a return to the past. While the message of the Gospel is itself unchanging, the call to be communities of disciples and saints will always invite us to ever-closer conformity to Christ. We must, however, recognise the opportunity to look to new ways of carrying out the work given us by the Lord, in response to the new circumstances in which we shall find ourselves.
- 2.7 Conformity to Christ, the Word Who is Life, is the call to holiness, which is the first demand on all who, through Baptism, are called to discipleship.

3. The Universal Call to Holiness and Discipleship

- 3.1 The Lord Jesus, the Word Who is Life, has given to the Church a task that is essential for the world: to “make disciples of all nations.”² This is a mission that belongs to all the baptised:

“All Christ’s faithful have the obligation and the right to strive so that the divine message of salvation may more and more reach all people of all times and all places.”³

- 3.2 This description of our mission is challenging, affirming and all-encompassing. It is a mission that we carry out both as Christ’s community of faith and as individuals. It is a mission we are called to exercise at every moment of our lives. For each one of us to fulfil this mission, it is essential that we grow as the Lord’s disciples, for we are those who hear the words:

“I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.”⁴

- 3.3 The disciple is the friend of the Lord; one who is conformed to the person of Christ; one who has answered the call to be a saint. Thus, our communities are called to be communities of saints. This is holiness:

“The followers of Christ, called by God not in virtue of their works but by his design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made children of God in the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified.”⁵

- 3.4 This is pure gift, the call to share in the divinity of Christ; the call to be saints; the call to be Christ’s people not simply for our own advantage, but for the mission to which He has called us. This is nothing less than the most wonderful life possible, the building of the Kingdom in a life lived in the love that exists in God.

- 3.5 We are at a time when a full response to this gift is more important than ever. This is no time to be half-hearted, or to leave it to others. While we may feel that we are not up to the task, aware of our weaknesses and conscious of our sins, the Lord still calls to us to be his instruments. St Paul, writing to the Corinthians, reminds us:

“... ‘My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness’ ... For it is when I am weak that I am strong.”⁶

- 3.6 Although the challenges may seem great, we can look to the future with the confidence that the Lord, the Word Who is Life, is always with us and that the Holy Spirit guides our every step.

2. Mt. 28:19.

3. CIC, c. 211.

4. Jn. 15:15

5. LG, n.40.

6. 2 Cor. 12:9-10.

4. The Life of the Parish – Prayer, Formation and Mission

- 4.1 By Baptism we are incorporated into the Pilgrim People of God. This brings with it the rights and responsibilities that come with discipleship.
- 4.2 Our parishes are communities of shared prayer and celebration, centred on the celebration of the Eucharist. They are the communities in which we find opportunities for formation. It is the Eucharist, this prayer and formation that enables us to fulfil the Mission to which we have been called: the evangelisation of the world.
- 4.3 There is no doubt that the lives of our parish communities have been affected by the experience of the pandemic. While attendance at Mass has declined somewhat, many have benefited from the development of livestreaming. However, there is a real need for us to reach out to those who have not returned. As members of our parish families, their presence is missed and we must all seek to welcome them home again.
- 4.4 The community aspect of parish life is clearly important, yet it has suffered during the time of the pandemic and has been much missed. The rebuilding of this sense of community is necessary and we have learnt much about the need to adapt that will stand our parish communities in good stead for the future.
- 4.5 In addition, there are many in society who are asking themselves existential questions as a result of the experience of these last two years. This is potentially a great moment in the life of the Church, for the Lord calls out to us:
- “Come to me, all you who are overburdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.” ⁷
- 4.6 The burdens that people carry are often very great and in these present times of financial constraints, new challenges are emerging, placing increased demand on food banks and the assistance given by parish communities to those in need. In more recent years, the development of the Refugee Project has been a significant development in our reaching out to those who seek safety in this country. This work must continue into the future, as conflict and the impact of human need lead our brothers and sisters to leave their homelands.
- 4.7 The impact of Climate Change is a further burden on our society, calling for action in all sorts of ways. The Diocese has been a Fairtrade community for many years and has disinvested from fossil fuels. Our parishes must grow as communities that foster care for the planet, the care for which is a solemn charge in us all.
- 4.8 The motivation for all our Social Action must always be the reality of God’s love for us, proclaimed in our liturgical life, our commitment to prayer and in the persevering and consistent recognition of the dignity of the human person from the moment of conception to natural death, lived out in a society that supports the Common Good that is a constant call to the building up of the Kingdom of God.

7. Mt. 11:28-30.

5. Steps into the future

- 5.1 As we look to the future life and mission of the Diocese, there are a number of key developments that must be considered, including the new possibilities that lie before us as a result of new Church legislation. There is also much that is wonderful in the life of the Diocese, on which we must continue to build.
- 5.2 It must be recognised that challenges lie ahead, but if we are resolute in measuring all we do by the life and mission to which we have been called, our course will be sure.
- 5.3 The Synodal Path, on which we have been invited by Pope Francis, will be an important element in our future life.

Ministries in the Church

- 5.4 The stable ministries of Lector and Acolyte have been a part of the Church's life for many centuries, reserved for those preparing for ordination. On 15th January 2021, Pope Francis extended these two ministries to all the lay faithful.⁸
- 5.5 The Lector is appointed to read the Word of God in the liturgical assembly, except for the Gospel. This includes the Psalm when there is no cantor. The Lector presents the general intercession, when there is no deacon or cantor. The Lector also has the function of directing the singing and participation of the faithful and has a role in instructing the faithful in the reception of the Sacraments. The Lector also has the function of preparing others to read the Scriptures during the Liturgy. On account of these responsibilities, reading and reflection on the Word of God is required.⁹
- 5.6 The Acolyte assists the deacon and priest in liturgical celebrations, especially the Mass, assisting in the distribution of Holy Communion when circumstances require. The Acolyte may also be entrusted with exposing the Blessed Sacrament for periods of adoration. The ministry includes a role in forming others to assist at the Liturgy. These responsibilities require frequent participation in the Eucharist and a developed understanding of the Liturgy.¹⁰
- 5.7 On 10th May 2021, the Holy Father instituted the Lay Ministry of Catechist.¹¹ The role of Catechist is traced back to the "teachers" of whom St Paul writes¹² and the Catechist is called to be expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith from the initial proclamation, continuing through the preparation for the sacraments and on to ongoing formation. This role requires many skills and a commitment to prayer, study and participation in the life of the community.¹³ The institution of this new Lay Ministry calls us to re-examine the way in which we use the term 'Catechist' and will, in time, lead to a more restricted use of the title.

8. POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter Spiritus Domini, 15.i.2021.

9. cf. Roman Pontifical, p. 116, n.5.

10. cf. Roman Pontifical, p. 117, n.6.

11. POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter Antiquum Ministerium, 10.v.2021.

12. *Ibid.*, n.1

13. *Ibid.*, n.6.

- 5.8 In this context, the use of the word 'stable' is significant, for the taking on of these ministries involved a response to the Lord's call on the part of the individual, together with a recognition by the Church, in the person of the Bishop. These ministries have the sense of continuity and permanence and they demand appropriate formation.
- 5.9 While many in our parishes have taken on responsibilities as Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and in the work of Catechesis, these three ministries call for something more. Their establishment does not mean the demise of the various forms of service that we see in the Church currently. Rather, for those called to them, greater levels of engagement and responsibility will result. Furthermore, the presence of these stable ministries in Parish and Deanery will be a significant service to the Mission of the Church, enabling deacons and priests to give themselves more fully to those things that are essential to their respective vocations – and thereby give more effective service to those in their pastoral care. It is envisaged that those called to the stable Ministry of Catechist could, in the future, take on roles of significant leadership in parish communities.
- 5.10 The establishment of the formation programme for the Ministry of Catechist is the responsibility of the Bishops' Conference.¹⁴ Programmes of Formation for the ministries of Lector and Acolyte will also be made available.¹⁵ Those who discern a call to these ministries will be assisted in their discernment and the ministries will be conferred through the appropriate liturgical rites.

Priesthood and Diaconate

- 5.11 We are at a moment in the life of the Diocese when a renewed openness is needed to what is essential in the ministry of both Deacon and Priest. This will demand reflection on the part of every one of us.

Diaconate

- 5.12 Reference has already been made to the place of the Catechist in the future life of parishes. It is certainly the case that Deacons will take on more significant levels of responsibility in the life of the Church. This could include the pastoral oversight of some communities. This will facilitate the exercise of the particular role of the Priest in the community in the Preaching of the Word and the Celebration of the Sacraments.
- 5.13 However, for this to be effective, a renewed vision of Diaconal Formation will be required. Some initial conversations have already taken place within the Council of Deacons and it will be important for those reflecting on a call to Diaconal ministry to be open to effective working with those in lay ministry, as well as the Parish Priest. New demands will be reflected in a renewed approach to discernment and selection for Diaconate.

14. Ibid, n. 9.

15. See Appendix 1.

Priestly Ministry

- 5.14 During the course of 2021, the Ongoing Formation Team serving the clergy of the Diocese arranged a series of meetings for priests and deacons, inviting them to reflect on their needs for ongoing support and formation. In addition, the younger clergy of the Diocese, under the guidance of the Vicar General, have been reflecting on priestly life in the Mission of the Diocese. Importantly, our diocesan Formation Team have been a part of these conversations. This group of priests will be continuing to meet with me in the time ahead.
- 5.15 There is no doubt that the ways in which priests will exercise their ministry will need to adjust in the years ahead. The new context will require ever closer collaboration between priests, deacons and lay faithful, especially those called to the 'stable ministries.' This will demand a renewed understanding on the parts of us all, as we grow in our understanding of the roles that we are called to carry out for the Mission of the Church. It will no longer be possible to see the Priest as a mere 'service provider.' Rather each of us must take our proper place in the Lord's work.
- 5.16 The Eucharist must always be at the centre of our lives. This we celebrate as parish communities, most importantly on Sunday. It is in this way that we fulfil the command to keep the Sabbath holy. The encounter with the Word Who is Life, both in the Scriptures and in the gift of Himself in the Eucharist, is the "heart and summit of the Church's life."¹⁶ It is in the celebration of the Eucharist that the precept of the Sunday Obligation is fulfilled.¹⁷
- 5.17 At a time when there are fewer priests than was the case in the past, Mass may not always be celebrated in every church on every Sunday. We must envisage a future in which Deacons and those with the Ministry of Catechist or Acolyte might preside at different forms of celebration. This will not lead to frequent use of 'Services of the Word and Holy Communion' (the use of which is envisaged for emergency, rather than regular use).¹⁸
- 5.18 The call to the celebration of the Eucharist remains insistent. There is nothing more important to our lives. This may well demand sacrifices for clergy and faithful alike, including a certain amount of travel and the acceptance of changes to Mass times where necessary. Without the celebration of the Eucharist, the living out of our faith loses focus and we become less effective in our witness to the world. The call to the Eucharist is a living out of the obligation that flows from our response to God's love for us. The graces we receive are beyond measure and nourish and sustain our every moment and our witness to Christ.
- 5.19 A number of priests have expressed the wish to live in community. This is something different to the 'Parish Priest and Curate' model that has been so much a part of the Church for many years. The desire for community is a response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and – for those called to live in this way – the benefit of mutual support and shared prayer will bring new possibilities to the life of the communities they serve. However, it must be recognised that such communities of

16. CCC, n.1407.

17. CCC, n.2180.

18. CCC, n.2183.

priests would most probably be required to serve geographical areas – or centres of population – larger than those to which we have become used. This will require great discernment, for such a way of living will bring with it particular challenges as well as consolations. It must be recognised that many priests will continue to find living alone to be the most effective way for them to serve those entrusted to their care.

- 5.20 The Clergy Ongoing Formation Team has begun a process to examine ways of more effective clergy support and formation, including opportunities for supervision and mentoring. Such initiatives will be especially important as we move into a new context.
- 5.21 There are particular forms of 'sector ministry' present in the Diocese, notably in schools, hospitals, prisons and universities. Each of these has its own specific demands. Hospital ministry is, generally speaking, carried out in the context of the Parish or Deanery and this includes the service to the hospital given by lay chaplains, visitors and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. The same is true of our prisons. As we look to the future, stronger relationships between University Chaplaincies and the parish communities in which they are situated will bring many benefits to both, with growing opportunities for teams of lay faithful to join Priests and Deacons in this vital context for pastoral ministry.

6. Diocese – Mission and Structures

“The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit.”¹⁹

- 6.1 Mission is at the heart of everything we are as the Church, for the Lord is sending us out into our world, just as he sent the seventy-two. That we might fulfil this mission, we are given the gifts we need – each of us, in different ways – and we are called to use these gifts that we might be builders of the Kingdom before all else.
- 6.2 We receive the formation and strength that we need for this mission in our parish communities, each one of them made up of the families, the homes, that are primary places of catechesis. In the parish, we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, to listen to the Word Who is Life and to be fed by Him in Holy Communion. It is in the context of the parish that we are baptised, confirmed and celebrate marriage. The parish is a key community in our prayer, formation and mission.
- 6.3 The first iteration of the Pastoral Plan made clear the place of the parish and the need to continue with a setting that is understood by all. The shape of the parish will, however, need to change.
- 6.4 In recent years, in a number of places in the Diocese, some change has taken place. A small number of church buildings have been closed and some parishes have come together, leading to priests serving larger communities.
- 6.5 The time has come for further change and development. While this will look different in different places, the direction of travel will lead to bigger parishes – closer to the size of present-day deaneries. These will be served by small teams of priests and in some cases, Deacons will take on greater responsibilities.
- 6.6 Those called to the new Ministry of Catechist will, in the years to come, take on responsibility for some communities within these larger parishes.
- 6.7 Most importantly, the time has come for every person to respond to their baptismal calling, fulfilling the mission to which each of us is called. Grounded in prayer, sustained by the Sacraments and united with brothers and sisters across parishes and Diocese, we must live the Gospel in its fulness, calling others to walk with us on the journey.
- 6.8 In order to facilitate the development that is needed, some measures have already been taken. Most recently, the central offices of the Diocese have been brought together in the St Philip Howard Centre in Crawley. The closer working together that this will bring about, will enable these offices to better serve the Diocese.

19. Lk. 10:1.

7. A renewed vision of Catechesis

- 7.1 Catechesis is, essentially, the formation in the life of Faith from the first proclamation of the Gospel Message, continuing through growth in prayer and the preparation for the Sacraments and then, through a journey of ever-deepening understanding of the ways of Faith throughout the whole of life.
- 7.2 Our life in Christ as members of His Body, the Church, begins with Baptism. All our life in the Church flows from this moment of grace, the encounter with the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As we look to the future of our Mission, it will be fruitful for all formation in Faith to begin with this Sacrament, for a renewed understanding of Baptism will, over time, ensure a well-formed and effective Mission.
- 7.3 At the moment of the Baptism of their child, parents take on the serious responsibility of bringing their children up in the practice of the Faith.²⁰ This follows the commitment made at the moment of marriage.²¹ It is for this reason that the first place of catechesis is the home and the development of catechesis in the family setting must become the common practice across the Diocese. This will require the continuing development of support for parents, both in their lives and prayer and through formation in parish communities.
- 7.4 Recognising Formation in Faith as a life-long journey, beginning with Baptism, will lift us away from the periodic moments of catechesis that mark our present pattern of formation. Rather than a concentration on preparation for particular Sacraments, Formation in Faith can then be seen as a continuum from the beginning to the natural end of life.
- 7.5 Preparation for First Reconciliation and Holy Communion, as well as preparation for Confirmation, can then be seen as part of a continuing journey. While the age of reason will continue to provide a guide-age for preparation for First Reconciliation and Holy Communion, it will be possible to introduce some flexibility, bringing these Sacraments to the moment most suited for the person concerned. Similarly, it will become possible for the individual to approach the Sacrament of Confirmation at the age most suited to their own journey.
- 7.6 Guidelines for Confirmation are being provided to the Diocese this Autumn. These have been approved for use for one year *ad experimentum* and the experience of their implementation will contribute to further discussions, leading to a new Confirmation Policy that, it is intended, will be published in 2023.
- 7.7 Much excellent work has already been undertaken in the renewal of Marriage Preparation and there is a need to continue to build on this. The privilege of preparing those called to this vocation lies not only with clergy and marriage catechists. The whole parish family is called to support couples in their journey towards the celebration of the Sacrament in their lives of dedication to one another

20. Rite of Baptism for Children, n.39.

21. Rite of Marriage, n.60.

and the children who are a gift from God.²² Accompaniment for couples preparing for marriage, offered by those already living this vocation, must develop further as a way to fulfil this support.

- 7.8 To this end, our diocesan Formation Team are working together to re-examine preparation for Baptism as the gateway to all that follows. This is only a beginning and the journey towards effective, life-long formation, while taking time, will bear much fruit.
- 7.9 The 'Invited' Mission that proved so effective in Lent 2021 will continue in different seasons in the years ahead. This is a prime example of delivering of life-long Formation and the many occasions, in so many different forms, when people come together to pray and deepen the understanding of the Faith will continue to build a community that is well-formed for Mission.
- 7.10 Given the necessity for every action to grow from prayer, the programme of Weeks of Guided Prayer will continue so that, in time, it will be possible for these to be delivered by those formed for this within the Diocese. The desire for Spiritual Direction that is growing in the hearts of increasing numbers of people – and which will grow still further through the Weeks of Guided Prayer – will demand further programmes of formation for Directors, building on the week offered in 2021.

22. Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Exhortation Familiaris Consortio on the role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, 1981, n.66.

8. The Mission of our Schools

- 8.1 Schools are a key element in the life and mission of the Diocese. The Catholic school is marked by its ethos, which must always be an expression of the Gospel. Foundation Governors have a particular responsibility in assuring the Catholic ethos of the school. Education, no matter how good the results, can never be the measure of effective Catholic Formation, for this lies in the life of a student whose entire life is marked by Gospel values and, for the student who is a Catholic, by a commitment to discipleship as a member of Christ's body, the Church. Our secondary schools, in particular, have a vital part to play in forming disciples with a deep understanding of – and commitment to – the life of the Church. This responsibility is, in the present times, more insistent than ever.
- 8.2 Our schools have a particular place in the journey of life-long catechesis, to which reference has already been made.²³ This demands a continual recognition on the part of governors and those in school leadership that the responsibility of the school – especially at secondary level – must be to form the young people in their care for lives of discipleship and involvement in the life and mission of the Church.
- 8.3 Catholic Education demands a great deal of staff and students alike, but the rewards go far beyond the life of the school for all concerned, since the experience of a school that is a truly Catholic community has a deep impact on the world.
- 8.4 It must be recognised that the school need to support the parents in the education of their children. Reference has already been made to the parental responsibilities arising from the commitment at marriage and at the baptism of their children.²⁴ In this sense, therefore, all education and especially Religious Education, is seen in the context of Formation in the likeness of Christ – not as education in its narrower sense.
- 8.5 The move to life-long catechesis will assist parents in their understanding of the place of the Catholic school in the life of their family. This formation, lived out in the life of parish communities, with the school as a key collaborator and partner, will further develop the three-fold bond (home-school-parish) that has been long recognised as a source of strength.
- 8.6 Chaplaincy in schools is developing across the Diocese, with some programmes of chaplaincy development proving effective in our secondary school settings in particular. The progression towards chaplaincy in every school – in a variety of forms – must continue. This is especially so in a world where so many demands are made on school staff and where the circumstances in which young people find themselves are ever-increasingly challenging.

23. See 6.1 above.

24. See 6.3 above.

9. Synodality

- 9.1 With the announcement of the Synod of Bishops, to meet in Rome in 2023, the Holy Father called the Church to a Synodal Path. The theme of the Synod is not strange to us, for our own diocesan focus on Prayer, Formation and Mission both assists us in our contribution to the theme of the Synod: “A Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission” and the conversations that took place in parishes were presented in a webinar to the Diocese.
- 9.2 The Diocesan contribution to the next stage of the Synod process formed part of the National process, with Deacon Jon Harman and Lizzie Wakeling (from our diocesan Formation Team) joining with all the Bishops and representatives from other dioceses in that stage of the conversation.
- 9.3 The results of the discernment of the Bishops nationally are available on our diocesan website.²⁵
- 9.4 The Synodal Path has brought many in our parish communities to dialogue in new ways, listening to each other afresh in openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Such conversations must continue to be a part of parish and diocesan life into the future and a significant step in this journey will be the development of a new instrument for consultation with the Lay Faithful. Work will begin in the Autumn of 2022 to develop the best way forward in this regard.
- 9.5 In due time, it may well be appropriate to hold a Diocesan Synod. Preparations for such an event will take significant time and initial reflections on this possibility can take place in the coming months.

25. www.abdiocese.org.uk/synod

10. The future shape of the Diocese

- 10.1 The most important focus for us in the immediate future is our Mission. The time of the pandemic has raised significant questions in the minds of many across our society, with people looking at life in new ways and addressing existential questions in their lives. We must step into this space and bring the Gospel to our society.
- 10.2 The Universal Call to Holiness and the Call to Discipleship, to which reference has already been made in this document, is for all people. "How will they learn the message unless a preacher is sent?" says St Paul.²⁶ Each in our own way, we must be bearers of the Gospel Message. St Paul's conviction about his own life must be ours too: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel."²⁷ The call to each of us to bring the Good News to our brothers and sisters is both urgent and necessary. If we fail in our witness, we are not the people the Lord calls us to be. This will demand an increasingly outward view – but we must go out into this space from a place of prayer, nourished and sustained by the Eucharist. Our encounter with the person of Christ in the Eucharist ends with the command to take Christ to the world, in every circumstance and in every way open to us, through both word and example in every moment of our lives.
- 10.3 Since the publication of "The Word Who is Life", the situation across the Diocese has developed and changed, in no small part as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions that the last two years have brought to parish life. The future will not be the same as the past and we are at a time when we cannot really know how things will look in the future. This is not a moment for caution, for trying to 'turn the clock back.' Rather we must respond to the Lord's call to his disciples to 'travel light.'²⁸ We must ensure that any changes that may come about arise from prayer, are grounded in firm formation and contribute always to the mission to which we are all called.



Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

26. Rm. 10:14.
27. 1 Cor. 9:16.
28. Lk.9:3.

Appendix 1 – Formation for the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte

1. Formation for the Ministry of Lector

1.1 Discernment

The Candidate for the Ministry of Lector will:

- Have been Confirmed
- Be living an active Christian Life in accordance with Catholic Teaching and Practice, grounded in participation in the celebration of the Eucharist
- Have experience of reading at Mass for a period of no less than two years
- Have a reference from and the full support of their Parish Priest

Initial discernment will take place in the parish setting. When the Parish Priest, in dialogue with the candidate, considers that the time is right, the candidate will meet with the Episcopal Vicar for Formation and the diocesan Liturgical Advisor, prior to meeting with the Bishop or his delegate, who will determine whether the candidate may proceed to formation for the ministry.

1.2 Formation

This will take place over a period of one year, with the following themes examined over a series of monthly sessions:

- The Path of Discipleship, nourished by the Word of God and by a deepening life of Prayer
- The Scriptures as Divinely Inspired texts
- The various styles of writing found in the Scriptures
- The place of the Scriptures in the Liturgy of the Church and the structure of the Lectionary
- The Scriptures in the Magisterial Documents of the Church
- The Development of the Ministry of Lector in the Church's History
- The practice of Lectio Divina and the formation of others in its practice
- The use of the Scriptures during periods of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and in non-eucharistic services
- The reading of the Scriptures in the home
- The proclamation of the Word
- The training of others in the proclamation of the Word

1.3 The Conferral of the Ministry

At the end of the period of Formation, and following a report from the formators, the Bishop or his delegate will meet with Candidate.

The Ministry will be conferred each year, at the Cathedral, on the Saturday preceding the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (The Sunday of the Word of God).

Lectors will be required to take part in ongoing formation appropriate to their ministry.

2. Formation for the Ministry of Acolyte

2.1 Discernment

The Candidate for the Ministry of Acolyte will:

- Have been Confirmed
- Be living an active Christian Life in accordance with Catholic Teaching and Practice, grounded in participation in the celebration of the Eucharist
- Have experience as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for a period of no less than two years
- Have a reference from and the full support of their Parish Priest

Initial discernment will take place in the parish setting. When the Parish Priest, in dialogue with the candidate, considers that the time is right, the candidate will meet with the Episcopal Vicar for Formation and the Diocesan Liturgical Advisor, prior to meeting with the Bishop or his delegate, who will determine whether the candidate may proceed to formation for the ministry.

2.2 Formation

This will take place over a period of one year, with the following themes examined over a series of monthly sessions:

- The Path of Discipleship, nourished by the Eucharist and a deepening life of prayer
- The Eucharist in the Scriptures: Key Old and New Testament Texts
- Introduction to Sacramental Theology
- The Theology of the Eucharist
- The Development of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the History of the Church
- The Development of the Ministry of Acolyte in the Church's History
- The Exercise of the Ministry of Acolyte in the reverent celebration of the Eucharist
- The Practice of Eucharistic Adoration
- Liturgical Resources with the Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass
- Holy Communion for the Sick and Housebound
- The Exercise of the Ministry of Acolyte in a Healthcare setting
- The training of Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist

2.3 The Conferral of the Ministry

At the end of the period of Formation, and following a report from the formators, the Bishop or his delegate will meet with Candidate.

The Ministry will be conferred each year, at the Cathedral, on the Saturday preceding the Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

Acolytes will be required to take part in ongoing formation appropriate to their ministry.



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

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