

Pastoral Strategy For Our Diocese/Discernment Process

The Partnership Development Group continues to meet to consider the next steps in the pastoral strategy for our diocese. At those meetings our parish is represented by Fr Michael, Jo Shepherd and Gerard Shepherd. As a retired priest living in our parish Fr Ian also attends meetings.

The Bishop is asking for suggestions as to how we can move forward in our mission as a Church. To that end a summary has been made of the themes that were common to all parishes in our partnership. You can find it on the parish website. Whatever happens in the future, it must serve the agreed mission of our partnership, our diocese and our Church. That mission is centred on worshipping communities that sustain themselves in prayer while reaching out to support the most vulnerable members of society.

One thing is very clear - doing nothing is not an option. If in our partnership we wish to maintain vibrant worshipping communities, we need to be prepared to change and to cooperate. There are currently nine communities in our partnership. Each weekend there are thirteen Masses celebrated. We are served by five active priests. The Bishop is challenging us to consider how we can continue to worship as communities if there are two fewer priests. Clearly the number of Masses would have to be reduced. However, the opportunities to worship in our communities can continue if we accept more lay leadership. These lay leaders will have to be carefully trained, committed people working across the partnership. What is clear is that individual communities will only survive if the partnership cooperates to support each community.

The partnership development group will continue to meet to prepare a response. During the summer the Bishop and his advisors will consider the responses from across the diocese. In the end the Bishop has the responsibility to set the course for the future but he is genuinely asking for our input. Please read the summary of themes from our partnership and access the information on the diocesan website.

<https://diocesehn.org.uk/pastoral-strategy-partnership-meetings/>