

**TOWARDS  
A VISION  
FOR  
THE DIOCESE**



**SUMMARY OF CONVERSATIONS  
IN DEANERIES**

## CONTENTS

1.	Pastoral Letter from Archbishop Kevin	p.1.
2.	Deanery Responses	p.3.
	Growing in Communion	p.4.
	Key Themes	p.14.
	Reaching out in Mission	p.15.
	Key Themes	p.23.
	Facing the Future	p.24.
	Key Themes	p.35.

# PASTORAL LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP KEVIN

My dear people,

In 2006 I published a document called *Towards a Vision for the Diocese* in which I proposed a process of reflection on the future of the Diocese. A year later I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who have contributed so generously and enthusiastically to this process. We have considered together three issues that are central to the life of the Church today: Growing in Communion, Reaching Out in Mission, and Facing the Future. Clergy discussions took place as well as discussions among the laity. These came together in deanery meetings in which a composite report was prepared, drawing the fruits of the conversations together. I know this involved a lot of work and I would like to express appreciation to all those who gave their time and talents to it. The next stage was for the reports from the deaneries to be collated so that we could get a picture of what was said through the diocese as a whole. This process has now been completed and I offer for your consideration a summary of what was said in response to the invitation to reflect together. Some copies will be available in parishes and it can be accessed online ([www.rcsouthwark.co.uk](http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk)). It is important that people feel they have been heard and I hope you will find that your thoughts and ideas figure in the summary. Not included in this present publication are submissions from other groups but I wish to acknowledge them and to offer assurance that the fruits of their deliberations will be taken forward to the next stage of the process. It is important to acknowledge that this process has already borne fruit in the life and work of some parishes and deaneries that have engaged with it. This document should help to further that development. But more work has to be done at diocesan level.

So, where do we go from here? Before Christmas I will be having two important meetings. One is with the heads of diocesan agencies who do great work for our diocese. The purpose of this meeting will be for them to “receive” the fruits of the deanery meetings, identify priorities and seek to develop a shared vision for the future. The report contains helpful indications for the future of the diocese, including the work and priorities of our agencies. The other meeting is one with the deans at which, in the light of what has emerged so far, we will begin to look at issues of practical implementation especially in relation to Facing the Future. In my initial document I mentioned the fact that in Southwark we are in a different position from some dioceses where the British and Irish communities, who were the traditional back-bone of the parishes, are now severely depleted and drastic decisions about closures, amalgamations, and new pastoral areas, have to be made. Of course, we have suffered from reduced attendance at Mass, too, but our congregations in many parts of the diocese have been swelled and enhanced by the arrival of Catholics from overseas. Our overall Mass attendance is stable. Our diocese is complex and diverse and there can be no one-size-fits all solution for the challenges we now face. At this stage, it seems to me that the deanery, not in isolation but in collaboration with neighbouring deaneries, is the most obvious framework for discerning and implementing the changes that will be necessary over the next few years.

It is my hope and intention, therefore that a Vision statement for the future will emerge next year. But we must take things step by step and a number of issues will need to be considered, such as the question of what expertise or what special groups we may need to take things further.

It is not possible or, indeed, appropriate to summarise the report in this letter but I would like to highlight a few themes from the consultation as a whole that struck me as particularly important for our future work.

In first place there was the centrality of the Eucharist and the importance of building up community around it, an open inclusive community characterised by a real spirit of welcome; the need for groups, like Parish Pastoral Councils, but also groups where people can pray and break open the Word of God together. In terms of outreach and mission there was a clear sense that this is a complex and multi-faceted task which involves dialogue with those outside the Church and outreach to the marginalised and those in need. Looking to the future there were real fears but also a desire to prepare constructively. There was also a strongly felt need for coordinated adult formation that is accessible and, indeed, for a good theology of the laity. Likewise there was a strong call for a real drive to discern and foster vocations to the priesthood and diaconate. The question of supporting our young people figured significantly as did a desire for greater integration of schools and parishes in the one communion of the Church. As well as concern that clergy should be more free of administrative burdens, there was a recognition that our lay people are also under pressure and not always able to give as much time to parish work as they would wish. And there were many other things that were said and proposed in a very positive and constructive way. Of course, it goes without saying that future plans and projects will be fully in accordance with the teaching, practice, and discipline of the Church. But there is scope for creativity and development and I commend this report for your reflection and prayer.

Once again, I appeal to you to bring this whole matter before God in prayer. The Liturgy Commission is preparing some resources for use in Advent when we open ourselves afresh to the action of God in our lives and in the Church.

Let us be open to the Holy Spirit in these days and have real hope in all that the Lord is doing in our times. As in my first Vision statement, I invite you to turn confidently to the Lord and particularly to the Cross where blood and water still flow from the side of Christ to give life to the Church and the World.

With my blessing and the assurance of my prayers.

+ Kevin

Archbishop of Southwark

Given at St. George's Cathedral, Southwark,  
on 1st October 2007,  
the Memorial of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus

## DEANERY RESPONSES

The following pages contain the summary of the deanery reports presented to area bishops through May and June 2007.

Thousands of people participated in this important initiative. Their responses, borne out of the prayer, reflection and discussions on the questions posed, were recorded in parishes and summarised into deanery reports. These reports have been collated here to form a working document for future planning and development.

The aim of this stage in the *Towards a Vision* process is to collate and present the collective thinking in the diocese. There is now the opportunity for parishes, deaneries and diocesan agencies to consider the content of this document and reflect on the lessons it offers for the future.

Aspects of parish, deanery and diocesan life that were frequently mentioned are printed in **bold type**.

There is some repetition. This is inevitable as the questions were set down as part of a process and discussions evolved through *Growing in Communion* and *Reaching Out in Mission* through to focusing on *Facing the Future*. The repetition is included here to more faithfully represent the documents presented to the area bishops and to give the sense of the organic nature of this process.

Some key themes have been listed at the end of each of the three sections to stimulate further discussion. These lists are not exhaustive. Different people will inevitably focus on different aspects of this summary depending on interests, locality and circumstances.

This document is one stage in an ongoing conversation across the diocese. Everyone is invited to continue to participate in any practical responses to enable growth and development in parishes, deaneries and the diocese.

## GROWING IN COMMUNION

### *Building Up the Life of the Church*

#### 1 What do we already do really well in our parish community?

<b>LITURGY</b>	<p><b>Recognise and celebrate the Eucharist at the centre of our community</b></p> <p><b>Have lively, inclusive liturgies</b></p> <p>Have the opportunity to attend Mass daily</p> <p>Sunday Mass is celebrated in different styles appropriate for different groups of people</p> <p><b>Children’s Liturgy of the Word</b></p> <p>Preaching relevant to life today</p> <p>Eucharistic adoration</p> <p><b>Opportunities for prayer and devotions</b></p> <p>Our church is always open for prayer</p> <p><b>Parish Missions</b></p> <p>Deanery Corpus Christi procession</p>
<b>SACRAMENTS</b>	<p><b>Preparation to receive sacraments</b></p> <p>All catechetical programmes</p> <p>RCIA – Journey in Faith</p> <p>Deanery Marriage Preparation, RCIA and Confirmation Programmes</p>
<b>WELCOME</b>	<p><b>Friendly and welcoming parish</b></p> <p><b>Welcome newcomers</b></p> <p><b>Welcome to migrants</b></p>

<p><b>RELATIONSHIPS</b></p>	<p><b>Clergy</b> – we have dedicated clergy, excellent relationships between clergy and laity, clergy empower laity, priests from overseas contribute to life of community</p> <p><b>Parish</b> – committed laity , generosity of spirit, offerings, time and talents, great range of people involved, good tradition of volunteering</p> <p><b>Schools</b> – excellent relationship with our local schools</p> <p><b>Local churches</b> – good ecumenical links, participation in Churches Together activities</p> <p><b>Other Faiths</b> – seek conversations with those of other faiths</p>
<p><b>COMMUNITY</b></p>	<p><b>We have a sense of community</b></p> <p>We love our own parish</p> <p>Parish is recognised as the place where we first identify with the Church</p> <p>Celebrate contribution by young people</p> <p>Youth Council</p> <p>Excellent youth group</p> <p><b>Involvement of young children</b></p> <p>Participation of uniformed groups</p> <p><b>Social events</b></p> <p>We celebrate diversity</p> <p>Inclusion of those from minority ethnic groups</p> <p>Good access for those with disabilities</p>

<p><b>SUPPORT FOR OTHERS</b></p>	<p>Justice &amp; Peace Groups</p> <p><b>St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP)</b></p> <p><b>Ministry to the sick, housebound and those in need</b></p> <p>Ministry to bereaved</p> <p>Pastoral Care groups</p> <p>Twinned with parish in developing world</p>
<p><b>Additional notes</b></p>	<p>Parish must be centred on a personal relationship with Christ and the Mass</p> <p>Catholic Bookshop</p> <p>Ethnic chaplaincies contribute much but we need to maintain unity as well as celebrate diversity</p> <p>Since Vatican II we have moved from a fortress mentality to inclusion and participation in the local community</p>

**2 What needs to be developed in our parish community at this time?**

<p><b>ONGOING FORMATION FOR ADULTS</b></p>	<p><b>All deaneries called for structured, flexible easily accessed programmes, information and publications for formation in faith for adults.</b></p> <p>Knowledge of the Catechism</p> <p><b>Opportunities for spiritual development</b></p> <p><b>CaFE and Alpha have been helpful but more is needed.</b></p> <p><b>This formation is vital so that catechetical programmes can be sustained and developed.</b></p> <p><b>Opportunities for parents to become more informed about scripture and Church teaching to pass on to their children</b></p> <p>More diocesan events e.g. Day on the Eucharist at Aylesford in 2005</p> <p>An understanding of the role of a Permanent Deacon</p>

<p><b>LAITY INVOLVEMENT</b></p>	<p><b>Need to raise awareness that through Baptism and Confirmation we are called to serve God and the Church</b></p> <p><b>Collaboration between clergy and laity needs further development</b></p> <p>Laity can be involved in all areas of parish life including preaching</p> <p><b>Need strategies to enable people to identify gifts and use them</b></p> <p>All ages can contribute</p> <p><b>Ways to enable laity to take responsibility</b></p> <p><b>Need to explore ways of unburdening priests from parish administration</b></p> <p>Priests need to let go</p> <p>J &amp; P, CAFOD, Life, Churches Together , Integrity of Creation etc often left to a few enthusiasts – a deanery approach could help here</p> <p><b>Greater sharing in the deanery</b></p> <p>Involvement of the elderly as prayer partners etc</p>
<p><b>YOUNG PEOPLE</b></p>	<p><b>Need to develop the whole area of Youth Ministry</b></p> <p>How are we listening to young people?</p> <p><b>How do we enable our young people to participate in PPCs, SVP, social life etc?</b></p> <p>Young people are part of our family not an add on</p> <p><b>Involve the Southwark Catholic Youth Service (SCYS) more</b></p> <p>More post-Confirmation opportunities</p> <p>Young People contributing to sacramental preparation programmes</p> <p>Catechesis for children at non-Catholic schools</p>

<p><b>TRAINING FOR MINISTRY</b></p>	<p><b>Clergy – more training for clergy in leadership, delegation, team-building and managing change</b></p> <p><b>Develop homilies to include Church doctrine</b></p> <p><b>A shared understanding of management – clergy &amp; laity</b></p> <p><b>What do we mean by collaborative ministry?</b></p> <p><b>Laity – Training for all ministries essential for confidence and competence</b></p> <p><b>Training needs to be accessible, flexible and appropriate</b></p>
<p><b>WELCOME</b></p>	<p><b>Need to be more welcoming and inclusive</b></p> <p><b>Welcoming to newcomers</b></p> <p><b>Welcoming migrants</b></p> <p><b>Need to celebrate ethnic diversity in our liturgies and social activities</b></p> <p><b>Need to develop the way we welcome those who are divorced, separated or living together</b></p> <p>More support for those who have recently joined the church</p> <p>Be aware of those for whom English is a second or other language</p> <p><b>Each Mass can have its own community – need to have a wider picture of the local church and get to know other parishioners</b></p> <p><b>Have more social events to enhance community</b></p> <p>Develop a sense of belonging – communities not just a random gathering of individuals</p>

<p>LITURGY</p>	<p><b>Liturgy formation for all ages</b></p> <p>Children's Liturgy of the Word</p> <p><b>Develop more prayer groups</b></p> <p>Develop healing liturgies</p> <p><b>Encourage other forms of worship as well as Mass</b></p> <p>Regular adoration of the Blessed Sacrament</p>
<p>SCHOOLS</p>	<p><b>Stronger working relationships needed with our Catholic schools.</b></p> <p>A strong school provides growth in Communion</p> <p>Parishes need to know how faith formation is approached in schools</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION</p>	<p><b>Need to develop our whole approach to effective communication</b></p> <p>Websites, newsletters etc use the best media available</p> <p>Use of technology, webcams / short wave radios, to enable housebound to participate in liturgy</p> <p>Learn from other parishes</p> <p>Be a listening church</p> <p>Have a diocesan newspaper</p>

<p><b>SUPPORT GROUPS</b></p>	<p><b>Need to develop Parish Welfare Groups</b></p> <p>Encourage membership of SVP and Legion of Mary</p> <p>SVP excellent witness of faith – they need to give some feedback to the parish</p> <p>Need to forge stronger links with local Voluntary Sector organisations to reach more effectively out to local community</p> <p><b>Better support needed for marriage and family life</b></p> <p><b>Support families – especially parents</b></p> <p><b>Justice &amp; Peace groups</b></p> <p>J &amp; P groups could be a model for developing other groups in parishes – often ecumenical and work in partnerships with others</p>
<p><b>PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS</b></p>	<p><b>Need to develop PPCs as effective collaborative communicative groups</b></p> <p><b>PPCs have a mixed response – some are very good others less so</b></p> <p>Members of the PPCs form the parish leadership team</p> <p>PPCs to envision and prioritise as a result of <i>Towards a Vision</i></p>
<p><b>FINANCIAL MATTERS</b></p>	<p>Promote a stronger sense of Stewardship</p> <p>Gift Aid</p> <p>Financial support for projects e.g. Wandsworth Refugee Group</p> <p>More information about where parish money goes</p>
<p><b>ROLE OF DIOCESAN AGENCIES</b></p>	<p>Review role of these agencies in the light of <i>Towards a Vision</i></p> <p>Develop a forum to share best practice</p>

Additional notes	<p>An understanding that the Church is people not buildings</p> <p>The challenge is where there are differing emphasises and priorities for developing aspects of liturgy or content in catechesis.</p> <p>For many Mass is at the time and place of convenience and we need to be sensitive to this, recognising the pressures on modern family life</p> <p>Need to develop spiritual qualities of charity, conversion, hope and humility</p> <p>Review the role of the Permanent Diaconate</p>
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### 3 How could we share our gifts with neighbouring parishes in our deanery?

LITURGY	<p>Have deanery Youth Masses</p> <p>Joint choirs</p> <p>Co-ordinate and collaborate on shared celebrations and services</p>
CATECHESIS AND FORMATION	<p>Joint RCIA programmes</p> <p>Joint training for catechists</p> <p>Share formation programmes like <i>Evangelium</i></p>
EXPERTISE	<p><b>To share expertise we need to be aware of what other parishes have to offer</b></p> <p><b>Have joint projects to support the needs of the poor, sick or housebound</b></p> <p>Share Child Protection responsibilities</p>
ACTIVITIES	<p><b>Shared social activities</b></p> <p><b>Need to improve communication so that all know what's on offer in other parishes</b></p>

<p><b>FACILITIES</b></p>	<p>A team of deanery business managers could look after premises</p> <p>Share halls and rooms for meetings and events</p>
<p><b>Additional notes</b></p>	<p>Establish a Deanery Mission Team to support and affirm communities</p> <p><b>Share a deanery Youth Ministry Team</b></p> <p>Some parishes are too parochial – need to encourage a new focus on deanery not just parish</p> <p>A larger parish could partner a smaller parish – partner not take over!</p>

#### **4 What resources do we need to develop our parish communities?**

<p><b>SPIRITUAL</b></p>	<p>Prayerful discernment</p> <p>Confraternities</p> <p><b>Prayers for vocations to the priesthood</b></p> <p><b>Need more priests</b></p>
<p><b>FORMATION</b></p>	<p>Resources for formation of all in our communities</p> <p><b>Joint sacramental programmes</b></p> <p>Preaching and information on the moral teaching of the Church especially Humanae Vitae and the promotion of the family</p> <p>Make better use of Christian Education Centre</p> <p><b>Training in Leadership skills</b></p> <p><b>Accessible training and resources for all areas of lay ministry</b></p>

<p><b>STRATEGIC</b></p>	<p>An active Deanery Pastoral Council</p> <p>A recognition of existing strengths of neighbouring parish communities</p> <p>A Co-operation and Collaboration Strategy for a variety of ministries e.g. visiting sick</p> <p><b>A plan for transport to Mass and other activities for those who need it</b></p> <p>More volunteers</p> <p><b>More widespread involvement of deacons</b></p> <p>A paid Deanery Youth Worker</p> <p>Share facilities – large worship space, halls, fields etc</p>
<p><b>ADMINISTRATION</b></p>	<p>Secretaries for clergy</p> <p>Funding for formation at all levels</p> <p>Share HR responsibilities across deanery</p>
<p><b>COMMUNICATION</b></p>	<p><b>A Communication Strategy</b></p> <p>Parishes equipped with technology and skills</p> <p>Deanery website, newsletter</p>
<p><b>Additional notes</b></p>	<p><b>Need a clearer understanding of Deanery and Diocese</b></p> <p><b>Deanery Resource Centre</b></p> <p>A deanery library for books and equipment</p>

## KEY THEMES

1. **Sacramental Communities** – Our communities recognise and celebrate the Eucharist as the centre of all we do through, with and in Christ. Celebration of the Eucharist and other opportunities for worship bring people together in prayer. The programmes that we offer, at all stages of faith development, support and enable people to experience a deeper and more complete membership of the Church.
2. **Formation** – Opportunities for faith development are essential for growth in our communities. There is a wish for more structured, flexible and easily accessed programmes, information and publications for ongoing formation in faith for adults. This formation will equip adults to pass on the faith more confidently and participate more fully in parish life. Formation and training could be offered in deaneries and provide opportunities for parishes to work together.
3. **Participation** – We have committed clergy and laity in our parishes working together to support our communities. As we consider the future we need to find ways to enable all people to discern their gifts and use them in service of God and the Church. Ongoing training for leadership and for the variety of ministries in our communities is essential so that all can be confident in their responsibilities.
4. **Inclusion** – A welcoming parish welcomes everyone. There are many ways in which we seek to do this and are successful. Areas for development are many too and there is concern that we might not always include young people, the elderly, the divorced and separated, single people, migrants and newcomers as effectively as we could.
5. **Communication** – We need to make best use of all the communication tools available to ensure that invitations and messages are delivered effectively in parishes, deaneries and across the diocese. We need to consider how we might harness the expertise in our parishes and ensure that we are reaching everyone in our communities in ways that are exciting and appropriate for 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## REACHING OUT IN MISSION

### *Moving Beyond Ourselves*


#### 1 How do we reach out beyond the boundaries of our own parish community to believers and non-believers?

<p>EVANGELISATION</p>	<p>The challenge is to evangelise in an increasingly secular society</p> <p>To be a spiritual community in and for the community</p> <p>Needs to have a higher profile in our community – not seen as a priority</p> <p>We're not sure how to do this – we're diffident about sharing our faith</p> <p>Need to be true evangelists – not just talk need action too</p> <p>Lay teams could visit those who want to talk about faith</p> <p>We need to look inward and outward</p> <p>The family is the greatest place of evangelisation</p> <p>We need to come out of the dark and make our presence felt</p> <p><b>We witness by our example – in the home, workplace, in local community and wherever we are</b></p> <p>Live Simply</p> <p>Be welcoming to all</p> <p>Offer and publicise Alpha, CaFE, RCIA</p> <p>House groups</p> <p>Learn from other churches</p>
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<p><b>FORMATION</b></p>	<p>Priority should be our prayer life as individuals and as a community</p> <p><b>We need to be informed and active Catholics</b></p> <p><b>Need training for all ministries including evangelisation and catechesis</b></p> <p>We need to be firmly rooted in our own faith before we can reach out to others</p> <p>Need to understand scripture and Church teaching</p> <p>We need training to be confident in talking about our faith – and have the courage to do so</p>
<p><b>PARTNERSHIP</b></p>	<p><b>Ecumenical links – some places very good other places patchy</b></p> <p>Active membership of Churches Together variable</p> <p>Week of prayer for Christian Unity – attendance patchy</p> <p>Do we really desire Christian Unity?</p> <p>Actively support hospital, prison, university chaplaincies</p> <p>Participation in the de Paul Trust</p> <p>Working with ecumenical and inter-faith groups to meet local needs e.g. Working Together for Wimbledon – keeps Catholics in the ‘market place’.</p> <p>Link with local campaigns</p> <p>Share projects with other churches</p> <p><b>Clergy Fraternal</b></p>

<p>WITHIN PARISH</p>	<p>Need to stress dismissal at the end of Mass i.e. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.</p> <p>Identify our gifts for ministry and mission</p> <p><b>Opportunities to welcome and evangelise at Baptisms, First Communions, Weddings, Funerals, Christmas, Easter etc</b></p> <p>Parish Missions</p> <p>Welcome programme reaching out to the lapsed Catholics</p> <p>Open days – come and see evenings</p> <p><b>Invite people into our church</b></p> <p>Hold flower, music, art festivals – be welcoming to all who cross the threshold</p> <p>Offer language teaching / conversation classes for immigrants</p> <p>Ensure deanery / parish website has invitation to find out more</p> <p>SVP</p> <p>Support CAFOD</p>
<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<p><b>Write to our M Ps on major issues</b></p> <p><b>Encourage Christian comment on political decisions and global issues in local papers, websites etc</b></p> <p>Use the local media to promote activities and participation in community</p> <p><b>Seek opportunities for dialogue with those of other denominations, other faiths and those of no faith</b></p> <p>Attend inter-faith meetings</p>
<p>Additional notes</p>	<p><b>Need to respect other people’s beliefs</b></p> <p>Celebrate ethnic minority groups</p> <p>Celebrate diversity</p>

**2 How do we bring the Good News to those without faith? How do we reach out in dialogue and collaboration to other Christians and to members of other religions?**

<p><b>OTHER CHRISTIANS</b></p>	<p>Support opportunities for shared prayer</p> <p><b>Work with others and share prayer groups, chaplaincies</b></p> <p><b>Greater participation in walks of witness</b></p> <p>Adopt the  symbol to show solidarity</p> <p>Encourage Catholics to join Street Pastors</p>
<p><b>OTHER FAITHS</b></p>	<p><b>We need to be more informed about other cultures and traditions</b></p> <p>We need to encourage informed debate</p> <p><b>Take part in local meetings and activities e.g. South London Interfaith Group</b></p> <p>Our schools could be a resource as they teach about other faiths</p> <p>Visit other places of worship</p>
<p><b>THOSE WITHOUT FAITH</b></p>	<p>Have Open Church Weekends and invite people in for tea and a chat</p> <p>Join local projects e.g. Nightwatch in Croydon</p> <p>Accept people where they are</p> <p>Be excited and pro-active about the Good News</p>
<p><b>CHURCH TEACHING</b></p>	<p>Be clear about Church teaching on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inter-Communion</li> <li>- Homosexuality</li> <li>- Role of Women</li> </ul>

<p>Additional notes</p>	<p>Closer liaison with schools – how do they support young people in their mission to evangelise?</p> <p>Need to learn how to speak out about our faith</p> <p>Have booklets explaining the Mass available in all parishes</p> <p>Demonstrate tolerance</p> <p>Encourage membership of SVP and Legion of Mary</p> <p>We need 4 things – Awareness, Contact, Dialogue and Collaboration</p> <p>Need to work with the media to promote faith</p>
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### 3 How could we enable our parish to be a more welcoming home?

<p>FAMILIES</p>	<p>Offer more support for families</p> <p>Encourage Catholic Families Group</p> <p>Address the challenge of co-habitation, divorce and remarriage</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION</p>	<p>Advertise events more widely</p> <p>Consider better use of notice boards, posters and newsletters</p> <p>Mass and notices in different languages</p> <p><b>Design newcomer packs</b></p>

<p><b>OPENNESS</b></p>	<p><b>Everyone is a Welcomer</b></p> <p><b>Develop the Ministry of Welcome</b></p> <p>Have teams of greeters</p> <p>Have churches open</p> <p>Avoid cliques</p> <p><b>Meet people where they are – without judgement</b></p> <p><b>Pastoral Care of divorced and remarried</b></p> <p>Reaching out to the homosexual community</p> <p>Care for prisoners and those with addictions</p> <p>Welcome immigrants, asylum seekers and those in minority groups</p> <p>All parish groups should foster an ‘open door’ policy</p> <p><b>Celebrate diversity</b></p>
<p><b>ACTIVITIES</b></p>	<p><b>Hold Open Days</b></p> <p>Offer conversation to lapsed Catholics at major celebrations and events</p> <p><b>Hold social activities that are inclusive, open and welcoming</b></p> <p>Announce new births, birthdays, anniversaries etc</p> <p>Occasionally have one Mass for the whole parish in hall or school so that everyone can meet</p> <p>Form neighbourhood groups to visit and support</p> <p>Hold multi-cultural services</p> <p>Have parish meals celebrating food from countries of origin</p>

Additional notes	<p>Make churches warm and inviting</p> <p>Masses are sometimes too family orientated</p> <p><b>Celebrate good joyful liturgies</b></p> <p>Encourage post-Confirmation participation</p> <p>Single people, of all ages, need welcoming and including too</p>
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**4 Aware of the joys and sufferings both within our parish community and beyond it, how do we connect with those in greatest need?**

PRAYER	<p><b>Have books / notice boards for prayer intentions</b></p> <p>Have regular healing / reconciliation services</p> <p>Have a Parish Mission</p>
ACTION	<p>Live simply</p> <p>Identify where the needs are</p> <p>Work with established agencies locally e.g. House of Mercy – Gravesend and Nightwatch in Croydon</p> <p><b>Work with national and international organisations e.g. CAFOD</b></p> <p>Support diocesan agencies</p> <p>Establish Justice and Peace groups</p> <p>Speak out against injustice</p> <p>Organise food parcels and clothing for refugees</p> <p><b>Sustain and develop SVP groups – strong in some places and ‘not off the ground’ in others</b></p> <p><b>Extend home visit teams</b></p> <p>Support family life</p> <p>Organise deanery support rather than every parish feeling it has to establish projects on its own</p>

	<p>Support Fair Trade, Make Poverty History &amp; Refugee Networks</p> <p>Reach out to E U farm workers</p> <p>Involve and listen to young people</p> <p>Offer financial advice to those who are in debt</p> <p>Twin parishes with those in developing world</p> <p>Have bereavement befriending groups</p> <p><b>Support The Beginning Experience for divorced, separated and bereaved</b></p> <p>Organise transport to liturgies and events</p> <p>Work ecumenically offering respite care</p>
COMMUNICATION	<p>Have an effective Deanery Pastoral Council</p> <p>Have lively websites</p> <p>Design information leaflets so people know how they can help</p> <p>Network our response to those in need</p> <p>Have a deanery database of parent and toddler groups, bereavement support, facilities for the disabled</p>
Additional notes	<p>Do not assume someone else will do it!</p>

## KEY THEMES

1. **Evangelisation** – We are all called to share the message of the Gospel. We need to be encouraged, affirmed and supported in this mission so that we can reach out in love and confidence to those around us. We could work more actively with other Christians and join in local and national initiatives.
2. **Formation** – It is only through prayer and formation that we will be more firmly rooted in our own faith and then be able to evangelise more effectively.
3. **Other Faiths** - We need to be more informed about other faiths, cultures and traditions. We could create opportunities for dialogue and sharing.
4. **Service** – There are many ways in which we serve the needs of our community. Our work with the poor, oppressed and marginalised could be more widely developed by sharing good practice.

## FACING THE FUTURE

*Together in Hope*

### 1. What fears do we have about the future?

<b>SPIRITUAL</b>	<b>Loss of Eucharist</b> <b>Fewer Masses</b> Not being able to practice faith could lead to people lapsing from the Church altogether Fear that new translation of the Mass could undermine achievements since Vatican II Who will pass on the faith?
<b>CLERGY</b>	<b>Fewer priests</b> <b>Priests may lose touch with the people</b> <b>Priests might lose their pastoral leadership role</b> <b>That workload may become excessive for priests</b> Rising age profile of priests Priests not letting go <b>We need to pray for vocations to priesthood and diaconate</b> Seminarians need to have a higher profile in parishes and deanery Priests will come from overseas without adequate understanding situation, language and customs

<p>LAITY</p>	<p>A shortage of committed people in all aspects of Church life – people not willing to do their bit</p> <p>Need to develop a culture of vocation of all baptised</p> <p>People feel stressed and over committed already</p> <p>Fear of volunteering – will I be in over my head?</p> <p>Laity must affirm and support their clergy and help them manage any changes</p> <p>Rising age profile of laity</p> <p><b>Falling Mass attendance means fewer people to do things</b></p> <p>A growing indifference to Church teaching</p> <p>Difficulty of some in accepting change especially over Mass times</p> <p>That there won't be enough appropriate training offered to laity</p>
<p>PARISH</p>	<p><b>Closure of our parish church</b></p> <p>No resident priest</p> <p>Parishes might close without consultation</p> <p>Small parishes getting lost</p> <p>Being absorbed by another parish</p> <p><b>Mergers swallow up smaller community</b></p> <p>If we collaborate with a parish next door it will lead to a merger</p> <p>Lose sense of community</p> <p><b>Dwindling numbers mean less in donations so parishes will find it hard to maintain buildings etc</b></p> <p>Aging premises</p> <p>Fewer religious to assist in parishes</p> <p>There will be more rigid divisions into separate 'Mass-time' communities</p>

<p>PASTORAL</p>	<p>Lack of support for families</p> <p><b>Lack of transport for those without cars</b></p> <p>Loss of close relationship with priest</p> <p>Lack of people to minister to lonely, sick, bereaved etc</p>
<p>SOCIETY</p>	<p><b>Secularisation</b></p> <p>Active media promotion of secularisation</p> <p>Hostility to religion</p> <p>Church seen as outdated</p> <p>Breakdown of society and family values</p> <p>Competition from other faiths and denominations</p>
<p>YOUNG PEOPLE</p>	<p><b>That there will be no young people in our churches</b></p> <p><b>We need to ask young people what they need</b></p> <p><b>Ask SCYS, CEC and other groups such as Youth 2000 and HCPT for advice on involving young people</b></p> <p><b>How do other churches minister to young people?</b></p>
<p>SCHOOLS</p>	<p>Closure of Catholic schools</p> <p>Our schools becoming 'less Catholic' – i.e. fewer priests and therefore no access to Mass and sacraments</p> <p><b>How do schools encourage Vocation?</b></p>

Additional notes

Maybe no fear if we trust in God

There is a fear about loss but also a readiness to face the future in hope

A fear of the unknown

A fear of change

A fear that we will become inward looking

A fear that the hierarchy is out of touch

We need to adhere to basic principles of Subsidiarity, Collaboration, Co-operation & Co-ordination

We need to adhere to the Code of Canon Law

That we will have inadequate Christian education

General apathy

Too much central control

Alienation of women

Fear that the Church will not consider ordination of women and married men

A fear that we might succumb to pressure to adopt short term unwise measures as solution to shortage of priests

Need to know what's happening in the wider Church

2. What forms of shared collaboration could be developed now at  
 a. Parish level  
 b. Deanery level?

<p>PARISH</p>	<p>Encourage a sense of Church and not be too parochial</p> <p><b>Re-connect PPC to DPC</b></p> <p>Joint meetings of PPCs to share expertise</p> <p>Develop home / neighbourhood groups as cells to support people and parish life</p> <p>Take administrative tasks away from priests</p> <p>Have stronger collaborative clergy / laity partnerships</p> <p>More services led by lay people</p> <p>We are NOT in competition with neighbouring parishes!</p> <p>Parishes and priests need to 'loosen up' and support each other</p> <p><b>Needs to be equal partnership on projects between parishes</b></p>
<p>DEANERY</p>	<p><b>Need to rediscover a sense of Deanery</b></p> <p><b>Need to identify role of Deanery – what is the vision?</b></p> <p>What is / could be the role of the Dean? Visitations?</p> <p><b>The Deanery Pastoral Council (DPC) needs a relaunch in the light of these conversations</b></p> <p>The DPC needs to be an Action Team</p> <p>Combine churches in the deanery – we are a community of people not buildings</p> <p>Shared Child &amp; Vulnerable Adult Protection Teams</p> <p>Collaboration across deanery for youth ministry</p> <p>Shared teams for parish visits to sick etc</p> <p>Parishes with a lot to offer should avoid doing so in a domineering or patronising manner</p> <p>Deaneries could widen experience of church music</p> <p>More multi-cultural activities</p>

	<p>Language skills could be shared across the deanery</p> <p>We need to organise funding for a deanery structure to support collaborative initiatives</p> <p>Deanery priests to circulate around parishes</p> <p>Could collaborate more effectively with regard to catechesis and formation</p> <p><b>Deanery could organise retreats, pilgrimages and large celebrations</b></p> <p><b>Maintenance of buildings should be managed in deanery e.g. use of same solicitor, surveyors etc</b></p>
SCHOOL	<p><b>Need stronger parish / school links</b></p> <p>Where young people are Eucharistic Ministers at school allow them to minister in parishes too</p>
LEADERSHIP	<p><b>Needs to be a focus on lay leadership and ministry</b></p> <p>Need to affirm leadership of priests</p> <p>Make best use of the management skills already in our communities</p>
COMMUNICATION	<p><b>We need to know what's going on</b></p> <p><b>Set up deanery websites, newsletters etc</b></p> <p>Up to date information about life at a seminary</p> <p><b>Audit time available / skills / talents in our communities and publish a directory for use across parishes</b></p> <p>Where are the I T skills? Invite people to use them</p> <p>Share publicity – collaborate on newsletters, posters etc</p>

<p>Additional notes</p>	<p>The diocesan agencies need to model collaboration</p> <p>Deanery often seen as invisible and the Diocese as remote – identity and clarity needed</p> <p>Collaboration is important to enable priests to concentrate on being priests</p> <p>Need to collaborate more with Churches Together and have stronger inter-faith links</p> <p>How can we collaborate with religious more effectively? What is their role in any revised structure?</p> <p><b>Parishes should be consulted before the appointment of a new parish priest to ensure continuity of life and mission of the parish</b></p>
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**3. What special areas of pastoral provision could deaneries share? E.g. schools, hospitals, prisons, chaplaincy etc...**

<p>SPIRITUAL</p>	<p><b>Planning and celebrating liturgies</b></p> <p><b>Planning and sharing retreats</b></p> <p><b>Hold a deanery mission</b></p> <p>Develop a deanery music ministry</p> <p>Share choirs etc</p> <p>Need to emphasise the spiritual dimension to our lives as Christians</p> <p>Celebrate joint Confirmations</p> <p>Hold big-screen Masses</p> <p>Celebrate Masses for those with particular needs – sick, young people, ethnic groups, special needs</p>
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<p>CLERGY</p>	<p><b>Deanery to encourage time off for clergy - holidays, days off and sabbaticals</b></p> <p>Encourage discernment for the permanent diaconate</p> <p><b>Priests to celebrate Mass across the deanery so that they become well known</b></p>
<p>CHAPLAINCIES</p>	<p><b>Greater support and co-operation in chaplaincies for schools, hospitals and prisons</b></p> <p>School chaplains to be a resource for the deanery</p> <p>Develop the chaplaincy to residential care homes – residential care homes are a huge responsibility</p> <p>Develop and co-ordinate strategies for supporting major events e.g. Olympics, The Dome and Peninsula Development</p>
<p>PASTORAL</p>	<p>Care of immigrants</p> <p><b>Support of those who are divorced, separated and living together</b></p> <p>Develop lay focus groups</p> <p><b>Form deanery SVP, Legion of Mary, CAFOD, J&amp;P groups rather than one in every parish</b></p> <p>Opportunities for people to learn sign language</p> <p>Parenting classes</p>
<p>YOUNG PEOPLE</p>	<p><b>Co-ordinate youth ministry expertise</b></p> <p><b>Co-ordinate provision for young people</b></p> <p>Adults to avoid over organising young people</p> <p>Offer appropriate spiritual input for young people</p> <p>Hold a deanery rally</p> <p>Support young people post-Confirmation</p> <p>Form a Deanery Youth Team/Youth Council</p> <p>Appoint a deanery youth worker</p>

	<p>Consider an ecumenical youth ministry</p> <p>Give young people experience of the wider Church through World Youth Day, Youth 2000 etc</p> <p>A deanery approach to supporting school governors</p> <p>A deanery approach to working with and supporting our schools</p>
<p><b>FORMATION AND CATECHESIS</b></p>	<p><b>More lay volunteers being encouraged to use their gifts</b></p> <p><b>Deanery co-ordination of training for lay ministries</b></p> <p><b>Plan programme for formation across deanery</b></p> <p><b>Deanery catechetical programmes</b></p> <p>Develop a Deanery Catechists' Centre</p>
<p><b>Additional notes</b></p>	<p>Need to look further than just parish</p> <p>Easier to be ecumenical if we had a deanery approach</p> <p>Develop ways of sharing good practice</p> <p>Develop a deanery lay team to co-ordinate joint activities and pastoral provision</p> <p>Needs to be well publicised and transparent strategic planning at diocesan, deanery and parish levels</p> <p>Offer honorariums</p> <p>Need more reliable volunteers</p> <p>Let people know where they are needed</p> <p>Hold deanery social events</p> <p>Deanery not always the most natural group, parishes could work where more geographically appropriate</p> <p>Think BIG and sell all the churches and build a deanery super church</p>

4. What forms of co-ordination and collaboration could be developed in our area if our own parish or a neighbouring parish did not have a resident priest?

<p>SPIRITUAL</p>	<p>Prayer needs to be integral to the life of all</p> <p>The Holy Spirit calls us to renewal and growth</p> <p><b>Review and co-ordinate Mass times across deanery</b></p> <p><b>Rationalise the number of Masses</b></p> <p>The number of Masses we have is a luxury – we need to move to fewer Masses</p> <p>Some parishes could cut their number of Masses to support a neighbouring parish</p> <p><b>We should be able to organise transport to all Masses – have a deanery minibuss</b></p> <p><b>Encourage more deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to lead Eucharistic Services</b></p> <p>Make better use of internet for prayer, worship and fellowship</p>
<p>CLERGY</p>	<p><b>Encourage more men to come forward for ordination to the Permanent Diaconate</b></p> <p><b>Encourage clergy from overseas</b> – but is this at the expense of the home country?</p> <p>Establish standard of English necessary for a priest from overseas before they take up a post in a parish</p> <p>Encourage priests studying in this country to participate in parish life</p> <p>Any shortage of clergy in this country is our problem and we should be dealing with it</p> <p><b>The Church needs to hear what people are thinking with regard to the ordination of married men and the ordination of women</b></p> <p>Rethink celibacy - We already have married men as priests who were formally Anglican clergy</p> <p>Encourage ordination of women to the permanent diaconate – women are doing significant ministries in parishes</p>

	<p>Encourage different models of ordained ministry</p> <p>Raise the age of entry into our seminaries</p> <p>Encourage vocations - especially by our schools</p> <p>Need to be clear procedures for contacting a priest in an emergency</p> <p>Remove inequalities in priests' workloads</p>
<p>ORGANISATIONAL</p>	<p>Whatever happens, people must still be able to relate to an accessible priest</p> <p>Have a Deanery Strategy for any changes</p> <p>Parishes could be clustered with 'mobile' priests – this must have safeguards so that the priests do not take too much on</p> <p>Need clear guidelines for Lay Leadership</p> <p>Laity need to be given and accept responsibility</p> <p>Laity to do administrative work</p> <p><b>Appoint a paid Deanery Co-ordinator / Pastoral Assistant</b></p> <p><b>Parishes need ongoing consultations before any major changes are implemented</b></p> <p>Close small churches if necessary – but have clear criteria for doing so</p> <p>Be aware of feelings</p> <p><b>Beware of any loss of community identity</b></p> <p><b>If the deanery is too big – develop pastoral zones</b></p> <p>Deanery could hold a study day to discuss implications of this process</p> <p><b>Archbishop Kevin to empower the church – for mission not just maintenance</b></p>

<p>Additional notes</p>	<p>Expectations are that action will follow this <i>Towards a Vision</i> process</p> <p>Must not always go to 'the worse case scenario' – optimism is needed</p> <p>Refer back to National Pastoral Congress and Easter People as a resource</p> <p>Be aware that one size does not fit all</p> <p>Adopt a professional approach to management and change</p> <p>Celebrate the ministry of women</p> <p>A deacon could oversee a parish without a resident priest</p> <p>The role of our schools needs to be explored</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given to any groups who were missed out in this process</p>
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## KEY THEMES

1. **Ministry** – To collaborate most effectively we need to ensure that we understand, celebrate and support ordained and lay ministries. Consideration of the expectations, role and responsibilities of priests needs to be given a priority. Training in leadership, community development and enabling change needs to be provided for clergy and laity.
2. **Collaboration** – There are many ways in which we could be more creative in the ways in which we work together in deaneries and across the diocese and still maintain a sense of community. There is much to be gained from listening and co-operating with one another. Small and large parishes have strengths to be shared and areas for development to be supported.
3. **Preparation** – Where significant changes in parish life are necessary all those involved need to consider the most effective way to prepare for the changes. Consideration should also be given to reviewing roles and responsibilities in any revised structure.
4. **Prayer** – Above all, it is clear from all these responses, that we are a community of prayer. The Holy Spirit is calling us to renewal and growth. It is through prayer, reflection, retreats and pilgrimages that we will be strengthened and guided so that all we do is for the glory of God.