



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

MARCH PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN: THE WORD WHO IS LIFE.

An update from Canon Kieron O'Brien and Deacon Nick St John

The Pastoral Plan "The Word Who is life" exists to help and equip us as a diocese to enact our baptismal calling to share the good news of God's love with all people. The first step is a new structure of moderated parishes to help equip us for mission. From there we will work to identify and deliver our local priorities for prayer, formation, and mission.

Achieving these changes throughout the Diocese is a significant operation. The meetings that Bishop Richard held with clergy and parishes over the last few years have been useful in enabling people to contribute to and engage with the Plan, but this is only the start. Change can be exciting, but it is rarely easy. However, there is tremendous goodwill, expertise, and enthusiasm in parishes.

The Diocese is also putting a lot of work and resources into supporting parishes and making necessary diocese-wide changes.

Nothing is achieved without prayer. The first priority has been to ask parish communities to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit to guide all our work. Next, we have developed an overall diocesan Project Plan to steer the process. We have completed the first stage of this; a preparation stage which took place from October to December. This included:

1. Finalising the Pastoral Plan document to encapsulate the required changes.
2. Bishop Richard's Pastoral Letter
3. Clarifying roles responsibilities, and people to help support.
4. Clergy events: Bishop Richard shared the Pastoral Plan. Clergy shared hopes, fears, and plans for their Moderated Parish.
5. Launch of Pastoral Plan.

- a. Copies of Plan (A4) and simplified abridged 'Pew' version (A5) distributed to all parishes. Further copies of both have since been printed and will be available shortly via the Deans.
 - b. Webpage and social media channels updated.
 - c. Communication and promotion of the Plan via Catholic media
 - d. Webinar hosted by Bishop Richard in January 2024 with Q&A. Attended by over 600 people.
6. Overnight event for 20 potential Moderators. Focus on detail of Pastoral Plan and their role in leading the process.

Delivering the Plan in parishes

The next stage of the roll-out of the Plan will take two years and create Moderated Parishes (MPs) in our existing Deaneries. The first two: Cathedral and Guildford have begun this process. Lewes and Crawley will follow in April. The early stages are:

1. Intensifying Prayer
2. Bishop Richard appointing the Moderator.
3. An initial meeting of the Clergy Team to identify actions to set up the Moderated Parish (assisted by Canon Kieron O'Brien and Deacon Nick St John)
4. Clergy Team lunch and meeting with Bishop Richard to discuss any issues.

The feedback from the initial Clergy Team meetings in Cathedral and Guildford has been very positive. Clergy were clear about the importance of working with a wider group of parish lay leadership, and building strong relationships. Inevitably there were some differences in approach and emphasis, which can be explored and resolved as we move forward.

The next stage is for clergy to start meeting with a much wider group of parishioners, to progress the delivery of the Pastoral Plan. Within the overall framework of the Plan there is great flexibility for parishes to discern how to meet their unique pastoral needs and deliver this at a pace that suits them. The key will be working with lay leadership, building on the great relationships and charisms that already exist, and developing relationships and structures for collaboration in the future. The steps being adopted in Cathedral and Guildford are:

1. Further build existing and new relationships at all levels.
2. Develop Local Vision based on Pastoral Plan: Identifying what Diocesan Vision means in each local community within the MP.
3. Consideration of strengths, weaknesses, threats, opportunities. (S.W.O.T) of MP. Identify main themes for action/development.

4. Establish priority areas for new MP to develop Prayer, Mission, and Formation
5. Steps to set up Moderated Parish
 - a. Naming of new parish (we are developing parameters for this).
 - b. Decide what teams/structures are necessary. Clarify role of Moderator, other priests, leadership team and stewardship group.
 - c. Appoint Leadership Team and support them to fit into new role.
 - d. Support clergy to fit into new role.
 - e. Finalise and Implement Formation Programme for parish clergy and leaders.
 - f. Develop programme of Clergy Support Meetings
 - g. Establish new MP Finance Committee.
 - h. There may be some changes to paid roles to reflect new responsibilities.
 - i. Review and develop communications: website, newsletters, social media etc.
6. Celebration of creation of new parish and commissioning

What can you do now?

Even if you are not in the first tranches, many deaneries are already doing great work having initial conversations between clergy and lay people, forming and deepening relationships, as a strong basis to then start planning action. If you want help, do get in touch (see below). Above all else, please keep praying.

Share learning

There is much that is new for all of us, and we will all be learning constantly throughout this process. We will be working to celebrate the successes that the Lord will bring and learn together what has worked well and how to overcome challenges. We are also learning about what support parishes need. Please keep us posted.

Support

We recognise that although this is incredibly important work, it comes at a busy time for parish clergy and people. There will always be people to help; Canon Kieron and Deacon Nick are the first point of contact and will be in regular contact throughout the process. There will also be diocesan experts on hand to offer advice and support on merging finance teams, supporting paid staff into changed roles, and supporting communications on and offline. We are looking at ways to support moderators and clergy facing change. We are already being asked to provide resources and 'top tips' in a range of areas, as well as providing training and formation activities - and are happy to do this. If possible. We encourage you to appoint a paid or volunteer project manager to oversee the process and are compiling a database of people around the Diocese who might be able to help. Whatever you need, just ask.

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