



Amber Valley Deanery and High Peak Deanery Roadshow

Saint Joseph's parish hall, Matlock

Monday 4th April 2022

7.00pm

Canon Don Bowdren, Dean of High Peak Deanery, opened the evening, welcoming all present from all the parishes of the two deaneries, and especially Bishop Patrick and those who would lead the sessions. He then led those gathered in prayer, invoking the Holy Spirit, and with the Prayer of the Synod.

Clare McKenzie, from Lincoln, welcomed everyone to the meeting and then outlined the purposes of the evening, setting the scene for the meeting:

- Explanation – difficult decisions have been made, different avenues have been explored;
- Exploration – these explanations have been given – how can we make these work?
- Expectation – what will happen next, how will we make this happen, what are the next steps?

Clare also indicated that although questions raised might not be answered tonight, everything raised would be recorded, and time would be given after the formal part of the evening for individual questions to be raised. She also mentioned that photographs would be taken and used in diocesan social media; anyone not wishing to be included should indicate.

Bishop Patrick then outlined the current situation in our diocese with reference to statistics:

- In 1985
 - Mass attendance in our diocese was 50,391;
 - we had 145 active priests;
 - we had 158 churches in which Sunday Mass was celebrated;
 - we had 24 students for the priesthood in major seminary, 2 in pre-seminary and 8 in junior seminary.
- In 2015
 - Mass attendance was 29,848 (a reduction of 41%);
 - we had 92 active priests (a reduction of 37%);
 - we had 156 churches in which Sunday Mass was celebrated (a reduction of just 1%);
 - we had 8 students in major seminary, 1 in pre-seminary, and 13 training for the permanent diaconate which has proved to be a very helpful ministry across the diocese.

So over that period of 30 years this diocese experienced an average 39% reduction in both priests and parishioners; but only a 1% reduction in the number of churches. That's the position, pre-covid. Let's now take a look statistically at the impact covid has had on our diocese.

- In 2021
 - Mass attendance last October was 17,468 (a reduction of 65% since 1985);
 - we had 85 active priests (a reduction of 41% from 1985);
 - we had 140 churches in which Sunday Mass was celebrated (a reduction of 11% since 1985);
 - we had 1 student in major seminary, 1 in pre-seminary (a reduction of 94% since 1985);
 - and 7 training for the permanent diaconate (a reduction of 47% since 2015).

The covid pandemic has fast-forwarded the decline in our diocesan statistics, but the number of churches hasn't declined in the way the numbers of parishioners and priests have. We can't continue in this vein of having so many buildings which are used for only a short period of time each week. In some cases we'll have to take the painful decision to close some churches, and we are all, bishop and people, aware of the pain of these decisions. What we keep has to best serve Christ's mission in our diocese. We are all part of Christ's

Church, and Christ will always lead us forward. For our part we must continue our reorganisation of deaneries, to be better equipped in Christ's mission. After a two-year covid period we now have to move forward again.

The average age of priests in our diocese is 63 years. Priests are feeling the increasing administrative burden, which doesn't present a good picture for the future. A clear roadmap has been asked for, and one which shows us all the way forward, giving a way forward in co-responsibility between clergy and laity.

There are green shoots, such as young men expressing a desire to consider priesthood, but this can take a couple of years of discernment, and then some (maybe seven) years in formation. Our schools have 30,000 pupils and students in them, embracing the three pastoral themes in the diocese: encounter, discipleship, and missionary discipleship. Young people, helped by the growing number of chapels and lay chaplains in our schools, need to be channelled into the future of our Church.

The laity in our diocese have many gifts and talents, but these aren't always brought into the best service for Christ's mission. The curia is working to assist the laity, as are the worldwide organisation Divine Renovation, transforming from maintenance to mission mode. This helps us to embrace the three pastoral priorities in our diocese: to help children and young people to encounter God's love and to become active disciples of Christ Jesus in the life and mission of the Church; to offer support and formation to parishioners to enable them to be confident agents of missionary discipleship, both within their parish and wider society; and thirdly, ongoing support for our clergy to free them up to be pastors, leaders and enablers of mission.

Will this discussion tonight lead to anything? Yes. There is a pledge tonight to make decisions which will help to make disciples in the Church of the future. It won't be easy, but we can all help to transform our diocese.

Feedback from the room

- In some parishes there has been consultation etc, but in other places not enough time has been given to discuss these sorts of proposals. Financially, too, there are more questions to be asked.
- There is a feeling that seeds are being planted in one part of the deaneries, and links are being made through the schools. Are the parents receiving the same message as children? More can be done for parents, such as the Sycamore Course, through the schools. This is another sign of green shoots!
- Volunteers are being recruited in some parishes, but aren't necessarily known to everyone in the parish. Numerous Masses in a single parish can result in divisions between the worshipping communities (per Mass) in the parish.
- In 1985 there were hardly any parish pastoral councils, finance committees, and catechists, but now all three of these metrics have significantly more numbers. There are different ways of measuring 'success' or 'growth' in parish life.
- Perhaps parish pastoral councils could be given more power, since they are currently advisory.
- The green shoots seen in schools don't necessarily engage in parish life, with school headteachers and lay teachers not necessarily dovetailing with parish priests and parish pastoral councils.

Canon Eddy Jarosz, Vicar General, outlined the process so far, talking back to the Diocesan Assembly in 2003, and *You Are Living Stones* from 2011. In this deanery work has already been done in bringing some parishes together into new groupings. There is a desire to create outward looking communities, to reorient the expectation that there is a way of working which allows us all to be more missionary, rather than simply

maintaining what we have at the moment. The average age of clergy is going up, and there is a need to consider how the resources can best be used. Are there more imaginative ways in which some of our buildings can be used more helpfully for the local community? Can we be better placed to engage with society? Can we utilise our outreach more effectively? Can the schools be more involved in the local Catholic life? How far can there be a growth in lay-leadership?

Canon Joe Wheat, Vicar General, outlined the groupings for the two deaneries, noting that in these deaneries there were some new clusterings, as well as some which are already in existence. Quite a lot of change is anticipated, together the possible realignment of some of the parishes in Amber Valley Deanery into High Peak Deanery, and some into Derby Deanery. Overall the aim is to have fewer parishes so that these parishes will have responsibility to work within existing areas of pastoral care and mission. What other elements (such as schools) should be taken into consideration?

The clusters are likely to be:

Amber Valley Deanery

Parish	Priests (now / future)	Deacons	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
All Saints, Hassop Our Lady and Saint Joseph, Matlock (Saint Teresa of Lisieux, Wirksworth)	1 / 1	Richard Walsh	St Joseph	
Christ the King, Alfreton with Saint Patrick and Saint Bridget, Clay Cross	1 / 1		Christ the King	
Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Belper Saint Joseph, Ripley	1 / 1		St Elizabeth	

Communities

- Franciscan Minoress Sisters, Clay Cross (2 houses)
- Presentation Sisters, Matlock (4 houses)
- Diocesan Youth Service, Crich

Chaplaincies

- Babington Hospital, Belper
- Newholme Hospital, Hassop
- Ripley Hospital
- Whitworth Hospital, Matlock

Relocations

- Saint Teresa of Lisieux,
Wirksworth, to Ashbourne parish

Closures

- English Martyrs
Bakewell (already closed)
- Saint Margaret Clitherow
Duffield



High Peak Deanery

Parish	Priests (now / future)	Deacons	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
Saint Anne, Buxton Saint John Fisher and Saint Thomas More, Chapel-en-le-Frith	1 / 1	Don Lavery	St Anne	St Thomas More
Saint Mary, Marple Bridge, with Annunciation, New Mills Immaculate Conception, Charlesworth	1 / 1		St Mary, Marple B St Mary, New Mills	
Saint Mary Crowned, Glossop All Saints, Glossop Saint Charles Borromeo, Hadfield	2 / 1	Owen Le Blanc	All Saints St Charles St Margaret St Mary	St Philip Howard

Chaplaincies

- Cavendish Hospital, Buxton
- Cottage Hospital, Buxton

Closures

- Tideswell (already closed)
- Gamesley (cease to be used
as a Mass centre)



Feedback from the room

- There is a significant disquiet over the proposal to close the church of Saint Margaret Clitherow, Duffield. All the arguments which were presented for keeping the church open in 2014 still stand, with no justification or response to the questions originally raised in 2014 when the closure was suggested then. The facilities in Duffield are used by Belper, and without them the parish would be significantly denuded. Consultation with the laity is very important in this regard, and it hasn't been in evidence in this case.
- The linking of Chapel-en-le-Frith and Buxton has been taking place over the past couple of years, with 'meetings' happening on-line, and this has gone well. Parishioners are now recognising each other, and feel it's a good move.
- The parishioners in Hassop feel unhappy about the ways in which proposals to restructure the deaneries haven't been publicised well. Have the parishioners been consulted? They don't necessarily know each other, at least not yet.
- The suggestion of parishes combining is a canonical situation, with a single parish bank account, etc, although there is a timeline and a process for this progress.
- Time needs to be taken to discuss these changes with parishioners, both to unpick some current links and begin to establish new ones.
- Some in the room felt that the meeting tonight was part of the Synodal discussion, although this isn't strictly the case. Might it have been easier to separate the two processes? The Synod is a time for rejuvenation, but now it feels as though the restructure is about maintenance of structures. It would be a sadness not to allow the spirit of the Synod to flourish.

Canon Paul Chipchase, Episcopal Vicar for Finance and Administration, explained the role of the diocesan curia, a full range of skills and expertise to support mission in our diocese, through parishes, school, and other communities. The curia, from a Latin root, 'cares' for people, for business situations, for agencies in the diocese, etc. The curia's aim is to take burdens off people in the parishes, especially where these don't need to be undertaken by those currently so doing: for example, assisting with financial issues, or building matters. We live in a world which is very much more regulated than in the past, and expertise is not always available at the local level, but can be provided by the curia. Sometimes there's a direct mission input, sometimes it's working through those who are in the parishes, schools and communities.

The key focus is to assist mission but with an eye to compliance, and ensuring everything is legal. A new booklet, 'Meet the Curia', has been produced this year, with copies available this evening.

The curia exists not to control, but to allow subsidiarity, with decisions being made at the lowest possible level, at the local level. However, to be more mission-focused there needs to be a shift in focus from bricks and mortar, to people, noting that funding is always necessary, and an 'enabling mission fund' has been recently established. There is a desire to enable all parishes to have all the resources they need, even when this might mean a degree of 'levelling up' to take place.

David Lawes, the Diocesan Chief Operating Officer, began with explaining that the curia wishes to support parish and deanery pastoral plans. We might have too many churches, but we are not here to manage decline. We want transformation, not rationalisation. We have a very good curial team, but it is a small team, and so might not be able to meet every challenge faced by every parish immediately: a development of capacity is being developed. Parishes need to be reorganised to be effective, they have to be good stewards of finances and property, and have the support to be truly missionary. This can be assisted by the

establishment of deanery cluster administration centres, to relieve some of the administrative burden at parish level. The disposal of surplus property can be advised upon, the employment of project management support is another element of assistance, and an awareness of statistical trends can be helpful to communicate.

A desire to alleviate administrative burdens at the local level is another priority, since this isn't a missionary activity, although does have to be undertaken. Common, on-line systems are being developed (such as finance), alongside internal and external expertise for areas such as property, IT, and other specialist elements. Working with young people (such as the very promising young adults group, and the National Schools' Singing Project) are areas in which the curia offers direct assistance. Ways of catechising parents and families is another area in which the curia seeks to offer assistance, so that parishes can be rebuilt post-pandemic. Clergy are being assisted to be leaders and facilitators of mission. The curia is here to assist.

Bishop Patrick addressed the meeting, noting that this is step one in the journey, and thanked everyone present for their openness in the meeting. Notes from the meeting will be made available via the Deans; please ensure that these notes are shared far and wide within each parish, sharing with those not present what you've seen and heard. Not all the questions have been answered this evening, but everything raised has been noted and recorded. Of particular note is the difference between a rural deanery, such as this, as opposed to some of the more city-based deaneries. The crucial question now is 'what do we do next to make this work'? During Eastertime a visit to the deaneries (in the new arrangement) will be made by the Vicar General, Canon Joe, to see what progress has been made towards making this work. Timelines will be discussed and all viable options considered. The emphasis is on everyone in each parish, not just those present tonight. We need to present this not in a negative way, but in an honest way. The reason for all of this is to be more missionary, more outward-focussed, and more active in our faith.

The bishop ended with a reading from Saint Paul's prayer to the young Church in Ephesus: the breadth and the length, the height and the depth of God's love for us, which is beyond all knowledge. Glory be to Him, whose power is at work in us, for ever and ever.