

Diocese of Brentwood - Mid Essex Parish Partnership Plan

**St Margaret of Scotland, Doddinghurst - St Joseph the Worker, Hutton
St John and St Erconwald, Ingatestone - St Helen, Ongar
Our Lady and St Joseph, Stock - Walsingham House at Abbotswick**

14th December 2019

Dear Parishioners

In July we offered you a two page summary of initial thoughts from the meetings of Stewards of the Gospel and Priests of the Partnership that had been taking place since January. We promised that we would give a full plan to you before Christmas; from January to December we have worked as hard and diligently as possible, sharing latest thoughts with Parish Councils in each parish.

We also took full account of the comments we received in July, and hopefully you will see suggestions that you made reflected here.

This document is the plan that we are presenting to Bishop Alan, on behalf of the partnership. Please take time with it – there is a lot to read and take in. Please let your Steward of the Gospel or Chair of the Parish Council have any comments – positive or otherwise.

We hope change will be as gradual as possible. You will see that for each of the twelve “strands of renewal” we are hoping that a “lead” person from each parish will work together with those from other parishes in the partnership, to develop the particular aspect of renewal. If you have gifts and talents in the areas mentioned, or a particular desire to see this area develop, please let your Steward of the Gospel know; they will be delighted to hear from you!

This plan is a mix of renewal and restructure; there is one page dedicated to restructure, and twelve to renewal, and this is quite deliberate. It would be easy to get caught up in a conversation about a particular Mass time or location, but **the Mission is** so much greater than that – it is **about bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to Doddinghurst, Hutton, Ingatestone, Ongar and Stock.** Not only to those already attending Mass, but to the whole community, and perhaps in a particular way to those who are most evident by their absence – our teenagers, and those in their twenties.

Please read these pages carefully, please pray about the whole plan, and please do offer feedback.

What happens next is that Bishop Alan considers the plan, between January and April, and he will then offer his feedback, balancing the needs and requirements of our plan with those from across the Diocese. Soon after Easter we will therefore be able to share with you any amendments or changes, and we will then work towards implementing the plan, gradually and at a pace that is right for each of our parishes.

Chris and Mary Brooks, Willa Jackson and Fr Leslie Knight (Hutton), Alan Chapman, Brendan Dunn, Brian Sainsbury and Fr Emile Nkumu (Ongar and Doddinghurst), David Berry, Jan Myers and Tricia Barry (Ingatestone), Fr Dominic Howarth (Walsingham House at Abbotswick), Caroline and Michael L'Estrange, and Bishop Emeritus Thomas McMahon (Stock).



Diocesan Prayer in this time of restructure and renewal

Almighty and merciful Father,
bestow your grace upon the Diocese of Brentwood.

We give thanks for the witness of past generations
and pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit
that we may be ever more faithful to proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.

Bless our Bishop, the Clergy, the Religious and Faithful of our Diocese
as we work together to evangelise our Diocese and fulfil our Vision.

Graciously grant plentiful Vocations
to the Priesthood, the Consecrated Life, Single Life and the Sacrament of Marriage

Strengthen us in the communion of faith, hope and charity,
United in prayer with our Holy Father the Pope,
and the Universal Church.

We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord
Amen

St Joseph the Worker	Pray for us
St John the Evangelist	Pray for us
St Helen	Pray for us
St Erconwald	Pray for us
St Margaret of Scotland	Pray for us
Our Lady of Lourdes	Pray for us

Restructure

- Future planning provides for one priest to serve the partnership, assisted by the priest resident at Walsingham House at Abbotswick. There is also “transition” provision of “half” a priest from the Epping/Loughton partnership, and we would hope to call upon that extra help when supply cover is needed, if at all possible.
- During the time of preparing this report, Fr Leslie (Hutton) had a prolonged period of illness, and Masses were covered from Ingatestone and Stock. In October 2019 Fr Anthony moved from Ingatestone to Stanford le Hope and Tilbury, and this means Ingatestone is without a resident priest. Therefore the partnership has already experienced some of the realities of fewer clergy, and the benefits and challenges of collaboration between parishes.
- We have considered each of the communities served by the partnership very carefully, and we believe that they will be best served by retaining one Mass in each of the existing churches & Mass centre, i.e. that there would be five Masses within the partnership (currently there are nine). One of the Masses will take place on a Saturday evening. Exact Mass times have not been finalised; we think it is most likely that there will be a gradual progression towards having one Mass in each community, and that it would be too prescriptive to establish exact Mass times at this stage. We believe that it would be possible for five Masses to be celebrated by the priests serving the partnership; on occasions where one was away, or engaged in Youth Ministry work, it is likely that only three Masses would be celebrated, unless supply cover could be found.
- It is very likely that there will be at least two, and possibly three, vacant presbyteries within the next few years. We intend to retain those properties, and would seek to rent them, ideally in a way which served the community (eg to new teachers, or to a partnership youth coordinator).
- In terms of administration, it is likely that there will ultimately be a central office serving the partnership. The location of the office would depend on where the priest was resident.
- In terms of material assets (finance and property), we have set out a more detailed picture under renewal strand 8. The “headline” is that the partnership is financially solvent. There is potential to make better use of the assets at Ingatestone, and – with the full encouragement of the Parish Partnership – the Parish Council are beginning conversations about this with the Diocese.
- The exact nature of the administration of finances across the partnership will evolve, and again is likely to depend on where a priest is resident. We are mindful of the restrictions of Canon Law while four separate parishes exist, such that each parish will need to continue to administer its own finances. In the longer term, when one or two priests serve the partnership, this issue will need to be revisited. In the short term, goodwill and common sense will ensure a fair financial arrangement so that parishes bear equitable costs when a priest is resident in one parish but covering Masses nearby, and where office costs need to be shared, etc.

Renewal

Strand 1 – Charity, Justice and Social Action

There is a very generous amount of charitable giving within the partnership, especially in relation to CAFOD. Local foodbanks are also supported with donations, as are homeless projects. There are also projects particular to each area, such as “Stock Cares” whereby people who cannot drive are helped to attend medical appointments. Ongar is currently the only parish with an SVP group. Hutton works closely with Providence Row and other homeless charities.

A key action from January – April 2020 will be for each parish to identify a “lead” in Charity, Justice and Social Action, who can meet together and consider ways in which collaborative working can help renewal in this area.

We have considered the engagement of young adults, especially, as well as parishioners of all ages with *practical* actions. We would like this to be something which is developed within the partnership. This could include practical service at a foodbank, for example, rather than simply contributing food. The partnership has benefitted from young people sharing first hand witness of CAFOD-led projects abroad, and we would like this to continue and strengthen. Young people have also been involved in practical service in Lourdes, and at the soup kitchen run by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in Canning Town. The annual sleepout for the homeless at Walsingham House at Abbotswick is “on the doorstep” of the partnership, and is a mix of both practical action and fundraising that could be readily promoted.

The Ongar SVP group would be very willing to help other parishes begin/re-start SVP groups, across the partnership. This would involve talking in each of the partnership churches, so that there were local contacts in each part of the partnership. Although much of the partnership is quite affluent, there are areas of need, and families who would benefit greatly from the kind of practical and pastoral help provided by the SVP.

We have also considered the idea that in Lent or Advent 2020 (and beyond) there could be a partnership-wide project, whereby everyone fundraised towards the same goal. CAFOD offer such large projects, or there may be something through the Diocesan twinning or another route which catches people’s imagination. Joint fundraising events would be a relatively easy way of bringing people together from across the partnership, and helping people to get to know each other.

Experience in one parish of sequencing diary dates with ecumenical partners highlights the need for us to be careful about communications across the partnership, especially in the area of socials and fundraisers, to minimise diary clashes.

Strand 2 – Christian Life and Worship

The liturgy, especially Sunday Mass, is clearly central to the life of the partnership – we all affirm the Vatican II understanding that the Eucharist is the “source and summit” of our Catholic life. To have fewer Masses does create an opportunity to consider afresh different aspects of the celebration, and to share good practice within the partnership. For each community to have one Mass may strengthen the community bonds, and the involvement of parishioners in the liturgy – that is certainly the experience in Stock, where already just one Sunday Mass is celebrated.

In Hutton, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is offered between 3-4pm on a Friday afternoon, a time when parents are collecting children from school, and this is a helpful moment of “oasis” for the children and parents at the end of the week.

The Brentwood Deanery already hold joint Reconciliation services in Lent and Advent, to which all parishioners are invited, and where a number of priests are available to celebrate the Sacrament. This is helpful for the partnership, and will continue.

Confirmation preparation is already joint between Ingatestone and Stock, and this could readily expand to include Confirmandi from Hutton, Ongar and Doddinghurst, with the celebration of Confirmation being held in each individual parish.

First Holy Communion preparation is already joint between Ingatestone and Stock; it is most likely, given the numbers, that this would continue separately in the other parishes in the partnership.

There is a good Children’s Liturgy provision at the Sunday morning Masses in the partnership.

There are very few weddings in the parishes, and so couples can be prepared in a bespoke way (see also Strand 4).

There are relatively few Baptisms in the parishes and so those bringing children for Baptism can also be prepared in a bespoke way, although in the future some element of joint preparation could be helpful.

In terms of sharing good practice, and enhancing the experience of Sunday worship for parishioners, there are several areas that can be developed in the years ahead. As with the other strands, a key action from January – April 2020 will be for each parish to identify a “lead” in Christian Life and Worship, who can meet together and consider ways in which collaborative working can help renewal in this area. This could include:

- Development of a strong “welcome ministry” across the partnership.
- Training and sharing of good practice for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and Readers across the partnership, with an aim that anyone from any of the parishes in the partnership could “step in” at any of the weekend Masses, as needed.
- Development of music ministry across the partnership, building on current strengths, and ensuring good musical support at each of the weekend Masses.
- Expanding the practice of praying the Divine Office before weekday Masses.
- Active involvement of children and young people in the Masses (notably in welcome and music ministries).

Strand 3 – Education

As a partnership, we are blessed with St Joseph the Worker Primary School, Hutton, which is a school rated as “Outstanding” by OFSTED and Diocesan inspections from 2005 to 2015 (the most recent inspection). Each class has a pupil “chaplain” and they help prepare class and school Masses together with the school’s gifted music lead.

The cause for Canonisation for Fr Thomas Byles (parish priest of Ongar who was aboard *The Titanic* and refused a place on a lifeboat so that he could stay and pray with passengers when it sank) could be of major significance in the years ahead; the timescales are unclear in terms of when and how the cause for Canonisation might progress, but in any case there is a natural “Fr Thomas Byles curriculum” around themes of inspiration, courage, faith and sacrifice which could be brought to local schools across the partnership and indeed across the country.

We are naturally committed to supporting all the schools attended by young people from the partnership and it would be helpful to have better information about where exactly the children attend school. We will actively seek to collate this information.

We are aware that many of our Catholic schools struggle for Foundation Governors, and that the newly emerging MATs also need Trustees. As a partnership which includes many skilled professionals amongst the parishioners, we are hopeful that, with encouragement, parishioners could volunteer for some of these roles, vital to support our schools.

At Christmas and Easter there could be special meals and Masses for University students; these could also include sixth formers, who could chat with the students about life at University. We could also signpost students towards their local Catholic chaplaincies, as well as encouraging them in leadership opportunities in our parishes and in the BCYS. This also applies for those aged 18+ who have started work, and/or are taking apprenticeships.

We are mindful that many of the children and young people in the partnership attend non-Catholic schools, and we would want to be particularly attentive to provision for them (see also Strand 12, young people).

As in other strands, a key action from January – April 2020 will be for each parish to identify a “lead” in Education, who can meet together and consider ways in which collaborative working can help renewal in this area. This would include all the points mentioned above.

Strand 4 – Family

Our support for families is a vital element of pastoral provision in the partnership. We know that there are many families facing very fragmented circumstances; sometimes due to finance, but also due to marriages breaking up, issues of mental health within the family, including dementia, as well as models of family which are less and less like the “nuclear” family of mum, dad and two children. It is essential for us to welcome, love and cherish all people, whatever their family circumstances, and as a partnership – in common with the whole church – there is a very significant task of pastoral outreach to be able to do this. Single parents, divorced parents, and gay or lesbian parents can all feel unwelcome, and this can then be felt by their children. We must work hard to ensure all families, all the time, know that they are welcome.

In Ingatestone, the parish priest visited many families on the parish register, including many who were lapsed, and this bore clear fruit in terms of opening fresh dialogue, and encouraging people to return to church. Families in need were also identified by such visits, and could be supported.

With fewer clergy, and such wide geography, the likelihood of a priest being able to visit all the parish families is small. Therefore we see it as a key priority for the partnership to “talent spot”, nurture, train and encourage parish visitors, who could go around the communities that make up the parish partnership, and be a welcoming face of the Church for people who may be lapsed or disconnected. The beginning of the parish partnership is a natural catalyst for this, as it could be a “conversation starter” to chat with people about the new arrangements.

The Marriage and Family Life team within the Diocese regularly highlight resources which are good not only for those preparing for Marriage, but also couples who have been married for some years and seek “renewal” in the relationship, as well as for those whose marriage may be beginning to show signs of trouble. The partnership can readily signpost families to these resources.

As in other strands, a key action from January – April 2020 will be for each parish to identify a “lead” in the area of Family, who can meet together and consider ways in which collaborative working can help renewal in this area. This would include the points mentioned above.

Our discussion on the area of family led to a broader question about the relationship between clergy and parishioners; we will return to this in strand 10, “Priests and People.” If the same priest is not always saying Mass in the parish, and not resident in the parish, the depth of relationship between priest and parishioners will be much harder to nurture. The issue in relation to family is that it can take a great deal of courage for a family to voice their problems or concerns, as it also takes a great deal of trust. So they may be reluctant to come and chat with a priest who is less well known to them, or not in their parish.

One answer could be the development of a well-trained pastoral team, to work alongside the clergy in the partnership; such a team could include people who always give the notices before /after Mass, and in that way also develop a rapport with parishioners. They may then naturally become people who are trusted within the parish, and who can be a “first point of contact” for those needing prayerful or pastoral support. This is not to diminish the role of the clergy, of course, but to name an issue which is particularly significant for the engagement of families.

Strand 5 – Formation

There have been a variety of initiatives in the last decade, but there has not been a systematic programme of formation in the faith in any of our parishes, with the exception of Sacramental programmes, where some parishes have offered provision for First Holy Communion parents and Confirmation parents in addition to the RCIA and Baptism preparation.

Some initiatives in the partnership are: Bible study in Advent and Lent; An e-prayer group, linking prayer intentions by internet; Talks about Scripture (in Stock the Church of England Vicar is a renowned Scripture scholar, and has offered such talks annually); Theology on Tap.

Looking ahead we are mindful that this is an area of great need; as in the other strands we would look to have a “lead” appointed in each parish, who could help develop the partnership in this area.

Given that this partnership includes a number of relatively small parishes, it is a particular blessing to be on the doorstep of the Cathedral, and part of our formation initiatives could be in signposting people to the regular inputs at the Cathedral, as well as the talks at Gidea Park. We do not need to “reinvent the wheel” but rather to offer encouragement, perhaps including lift-sharing, etc., to help people avail of opportunities that already exist.

From the partnership, outreach to “resting” Catholics, and those who have never encountered the Christian faith, could be a way to help in formation of existing as well as new parishioners.

As we try to build the identity of the partnership, a series of talks in Lent, with one in each of the different churches, could help both in formation and in people getting to know each other. Catholic Voices could be a provider for such talks. “Landings” may also be a helpful programme.

Formation of those who have lay ministries within the parishes will also be very significant – joint programmes for Readers, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, will help formation and will also help in giving a natural “ease” when people minister across the parishes in the partnership.

Strand 6 – Integration

As the partnership brings together a number of small parishes, spread across a moderately large geographical area, there will be challenges to integration from an “internal” perspective – helping those who have been used to a particular Mass, in a particular parish, to feel integrated across the partnership.

This will be a gradual process – experience elsewhere suggests it takes at least a decade – and so it will require patience and grace.

It is a cultural change – from “my parish” to “our partnership” – a move away from parameters and boundaries of the past. Some of this will be very difficult to people who have deep roots in particular churches and communities, and this is recognised and respected by everyone involved.

The principle we would hope to develop is the long-standing principle that guides Ecumenism: “Never do apart those things you can do together.”

As with the other strands it will be helpful to appoint a “lead” from each parish in the partnership.

It could be helpful to offer a “One Mass Sunday” at some point during 2020/21 – every priest in the partnership coming together, probably in Hutton (as the largest church, seating 500 at capacity, which is more than the combined Mass attendance across the partnership), followed by refreshments in the school. A day to meet and celebrate; a day when no other Masses would be offered in the partnership; lift-sharing would be arranged; musical and liturgical talents would be combined; there would be lots of notice over several months.

As indicated in our comments about “Restructure” within the partnership, the question of integrating administrative elements in the partnership will also be a matter for consideration; the more that the partnership integrates, the more natural it will be to integrate administrative elements.

All of this is, however, still “inward” facing – as a partnership, echoing earlier strands, we would also want to be “outward” facing, seeking to integrate those who we have yet to meet, and who have yet to meet us. Active publicity, visiting, and a strong sense of welcome as a hallmark of the partnership will all assist with this.

Strand 7 – Leaders

It will be a cultural change to fully embed lay leadership in our parish partnership; people have generally been used to leadership coming from the priest, and although the clergy will retain a leadership role (not least due to the provisions of Canon Law) it is clear that the laity will (and should) take much greater leadership roles and responsibilities in the future.

For each of strands 1-6, and again in strands 8-12, we envisage a “lead” from each parish coming together; this gives 11 teams of 4 people, who will – each in their own area – take a leadership role. Some people may take on more than one area, but we could hope for perhaps 30 parishioners, from across the partnership, involved in shaping and nurturing the different strands of renewal.

In terms of developing significant lay leadership capacity within the partnership, we would look to the Diocese to provide a well-resourced, well-structured programme, accessible to those in work (so probably delivered through a mix of online learning and seminar days), to form lay leaders. It is likely this would be a two year programme, given the depth and range of learning needed. It could build on the training given to the Stewards, and indeed it may be that the Stewards take on the role of lay leaders in each community. However, since they have already given three rather intense years to this process, this is in no way something that can be expected of them.

For such lay leadership to become embedded, the lay leaders would need to be “talent spotted”; they would need the confidence of the clergy and wider parish community; the training would need to be accredited by the Diocese (much like the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, for teachers); there would need to be a clear “Job Description”. Ideally the role would also be time limited, perhaps taking the model of School Governance of a three year appointment, renewable once.

Strand 8 – Material Assets

There is a summary here; full details of the accounts of each parish, and notes about the buildings and their state of repair, can be found in the Appendix.

- St Joseph the Worker, Hutton, currently has a £13,000 deficit. It is envisaged that the parish will be back into surplus, and this will be achieved by reviewing the hall income and Gift Aid. There is no major foreseen expenditure, and all buildings are in good repair, especially the hall and presbytery.
- St John and St Erconwald, Ingatestone, currently has a £36,000 deficit. However, this is mitigated by the fact that a £6000/year surplus is paying off an existing loan, finishing by 2022. The presbytery needs urgent remedial work and the whole partnership supports this, with a view to the work being completed by Easter 2020 so that the house can either be rented, or available for a resident priest.
- Our Lady and St Joseph, Stock has a surplus of £66,000. This is a healthy surplus but dependent upon the great generosity of a relatively small number of parishioners. The presbytery is maintained by the Gillow Trust, which is also a help. The church and presbytery are in good order, with the exception of some work on one aisle in the church. None of the property is listed, but it could be eligible for listing. The Gillow Trust own all the property. The Trustees are likely to be amenable to any requests whereby the property continues to benefit the Catholic community in Stock, and this can be quite broadly understood.
- St Helen's Ongar and St Margaret of Scotland, Doddinghurst, have a surplus of £7,000, due to very tight stewardship over the last 3-4 years, and with an annual surplus of £5,000-£7,000. The hall income is strong, and gift aid is strong. There is expenditure needed on the presbytery and the church also needs "TLC" but forecast expenditure is within the means of the parish, and an annual surplus is expected to continue. Ongar presbytery is listed, and the listing affects St Helen's church due to the provisions of "curtilage." Doddinghurst has a covenant on the land, but it is unclear what the terms of the covenant are. This is being looked into by the parish, assisted by the Diocesan Property Department.

Taken together, this leaves the partnership in reasonable financial shape, with good assets. It was felt that reducing the number of Masses would probably cause people to move between partnership churches, rather than leave, and also that extra income could be generated by the renting of presbyteries in the future. It is not envisaged that any property would be sold.

It will be natural for the chairs of the Finance Committees in each of the partnership parishes to begin to meet from April 2020, and for financial information to be shared across the partnership, as well as foreseen needs and unexpected problems. The provisions of Canon Law mean that each separate parish retains separate accounts; it will be a matter for the finance leads and wider partnership to consider when and if further integration is appropriate, recognising the Canonical implications.

As the number of clergy diminishes, the financial considerations of what it means for a parish to receive rental income from a presbytery, while supporting a priest who lives in another parish, and potentially with a more centralised administrative provision, will all need to be worked through. Given that we do not know the order in which clergy will retire, etc., or indeed when those retirements will take place, it feels to us to be far too prescriptive to try to take more detailed decisions at this time.

Strand 9 – Prayer and Spirituality

There are a variety of initiatives which have been or are being tried in different parishes, including:

- Prayer Groups in people's homes
- Friday afternoon Exposition and Benediction (Hutton, to fit with the end of the school day)
- "Mother's prayers" one afternoon in St Joseph's School from 2.30pm
- Ecumenical Intercessory Group (Stock – prayers for the ill in the village; a list taken from each church to a group that prays for them all by name).
- Saturday morning Exposition in Advent; Evening Prayer and Benediction in Lent (Stock)
- Blessing of graves in November (Ingatestone, Stock and Ongar)
- Morning Prayer before Mass (Ingatestone and Stock)
- Walk of Witness on Good Friday (Ingatestone, Stock, Hutton and Ongar) – together with local churches
- "E-prayers" in Ongar; the ability to ask for prayer online, with a group committed to looking at the requests and offering prayers.
- Annual Ecumenical service of Unity (Stock)
- Churches Together meet regularly for shared prayers and events in Doddinghurst and Ongar

As for the other strands, we would propose that a "lead" from each parish would come together, to be able to promote existing opportunities, as well as highlight new opportunities within the partnership. This could include:

- Partnership pilgrimages – to Bradwell, as somewhere local and therefore easy to reach, as well as perhaps to Walsingham, or even abroad, where the numbers across the partnership make possible what it would be hard for an individual parish to organise alone.
- A partnership prayer group – meeting on rotation in different churches, and offering different styles of prayer (Taize prayer, meditative prayer, lectio divina, etc), as well as periods using material such as Café or Alpha.
- A prayer and social group for young people, again offering different styles of prayer
- A partnership Mission, perhaps aiming for post-Easter 2021 or 2022, where evenings are lighter, and where the liturgy is naturally "celebratory." Talks in each of the parishes, during a week or so, with morning, afternoon and evening opportunities to suit different age groups

Strand 10 – Priests and People

This partnership embraces the collegiate and collaborative spirit of Vatican II – priests and lay people working together, using their gifts and talents for the good of the whole community. We recognise that Canon Law and Civil Law require some elements of parish life to be authorised by the priest, and some roles are proper to the priest, as an Ordained Minister in the Church, but there is so much that can be done collaboratively. In particular there are lay people with professional and pastoral gifts and talents that have been under-used, and where the partnership gives the chance to use these in fresh and excellent ways.

As noted in Strand 4 (Family), the declining number of clergy, and the geographical area of the Partnership, does present a particular challenge for the relationship between priest and people. The small and relatively intimate parishes that we have now will not be able to continue in the same way; there is a sense that each community will need to be more “self-dependent.” This is not the same as “independent” or “unsupported” – to be self-dependent requires priests and people to work well together, so that the community can flourish when the priest is not there, and so that people in the community know who to call for different pastoral and administrative needs. It is a challenge, a culture change, and an opportunity – most especially an opportunity to nurture the gifts and talents of lay people, in leadership.

We believe that the Stewards of the Gospel process, and the planning for parish partnerships, have helped people to see better the “24/7” nature of priestly ministry, even in relatively small parishes; the priest is always “on call” unless physically away from the parish. In addition, priests in smaller parishes often have additional Diocesan roles (the former PP at Ingatestone was the Vicar General for the Diocese) or may be people who, in almost any other “job”, would have retired.

Therefore – as with the other strands – we hope that each parish will provide a “lead” person to consider this area more deeply, working with the clergy, and in particular to consider “roles and responsibilities” to help give more clarity.

We hope that the partnership will be one where the voice of every person is listened to – and where young people, especially, have a valued and clear voice in helping to shape what is on offer.

As noted in Strand 7 (leaders), we look to the Diocese to provide an accredited and appropriately comprehensive programme of formation for lay leaders; we would envisage this as a course for which people are nominated, making a commitment to one or two years of training, through a mix of online and face to face training. We understand that the Diocese is shortly to appoint a Director of Adult Formation and Lay Leadership and hope that the formulation and delivery of such a course is part of their remit. We know that for those in Youth Leadership there is the Bishop’s Certificate in Catechesis and Youth Ministry.

We understand that in times of very bad weather such as snow or heavy rain that caused flooding, greatly limiting the ability of a priest to travel between our rural locations, a Service of the Word and Holy Communion is permitted. Lay people are trained to lead such a service. However, there is one outstanding question for us, for consideration at the Diocese:

- Is it possible to revisit the restriction on the celebration of a Service of the Word and Holy Communion on a Sunday, on occasions where a supply priest cannot be found. We feel this would be preferable, for the identity of the community, rather than asking people to attend Mass elsewhere. Although this would not be regular, it would be “planned” and so we think it would currently be prohibited; could it be permitted?

Strand 11 – Vocations to the Priesthood

We understand why this has been formulated in a relatively narrow way – “*Vocations to the Priesthood*” – given that there are fewer clergy – but we feel that the nurturing of all vocations, and the sense that every person is “called by God to some definite service” (qv St John Henry Newman), is an approach which helps to nurture priestly vocations. Indeed, if the focus is only on priestly vocations, 50% of the congregation are excluded!

We highly value the ministry of married clergy – priests and deacons – within the Diocese.

As with the other strands, we would look to bring together a person from each parish who could take the “lead” in this area, but in a way which nurtured the sense that everyone is called by God, personally and in a way which recognises their gifts and talents.

That said, we believe that there are also opportunities which can be used to help foster vocations to the priesthood:

- Good Shepherd Sunday (where we would look to the Diocese for engaging and helpful resources).
- Prayer for vocations to the priesthood as a permanent fixture in each newsletter.
- Better promotion of the enquirers group for priesthood.
- A sharing of vocational stories – we recognise that as smaller parishes there has not been the ability to place a seminarian within any one individual parish. However, as a partnership we feel a seminarian’s placement would be a fruitful experience – for them and for all in the partnership who heard their story.
- Posters of the Diocesan seminarians could be regularly updated and reissued.
- We would like to suggest that there is a retreat for young people around the theme of “calling”/vocation, which would be open to (though not exclusively for) those considering vocation to the priesthood.
- Continuing to share the inspirational story of Fr Thomas Byles.

Strand 12 – Young people

Much of our provision for young people is for the very youngest, as there are very few teenagers attending Mass in the partnership – perhaps fewer than 30 across all five churches.

- In Stock there are several young families, and the beginnings of a children’s liturgy provision.
- In Hutton, Ingatestone and Doddinghurst there is a vibrant Children’s Liturgy.
- In Hutton there are a handful of teenagers who are active as altar servers, as well as being active in the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service; the parish is supportive when they travel to Lourdes.
- At Ingatestone young people are involved in the Masses at Christmas. The Confirmation course is held every three years. There are currently 9 young people on the Confirmation course – including 5 who regularly serve on the altar.
- Ongar have some young families, and at Doddinghurst there is generally a younger congregation – but there are very few teenagers.
- Our primary and secondary school children (at Catholic schools) take part in retreats at Walsingham House at Abbotswick.
- Teenagers from across the partnership attend Brentwood Catholic Youth Service events including the monthly Youth Mass at the Cathedral.
- Our (small) Confirmation groups have participated in retreats at Walsingham House at Abbotswick, usually jointly with other parishes in the Diocese (for example in November 2019 the Ingatestone group enjoyed a retreat with young people from St Teresa’s, Lexden); this has often stimulated interest in the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service. A former Assistant Manager at Walsingham House (Claire Bailey) and Director of the BCYS (Sarah Barber) were both from St Joseph the Worker, Hutton.
- We are proposing to gather young people from across the partnership during the first part of 2020, to be able to hear their ideas in a relaxed and informal social setting.

There are many things which compete for teenage attention on a Sunday – some have weekend jobs, some play sport, some are in families where they are away with one parent one weekend in two.

We have looked carefully at the document “Employing a Parish Partnership Youth Co-ordinator” (PPYC) and – mindful of the stark reality of numbers of teenagers attending Masses within the partnership – would propose entering into the employment of a Co-ordinator as a joint venture with Brentwood Cathedral. This would help to create a “dynamic” for young people, with a sense of belonging to a larger group. We recognise that this would mean the Cathedral would be the natural “hub” for many activities but would hope to work with the Cathedral to design the role of the PPYC in such a way that the parishes in the partnership were all involved in sustaining and promoting youth ministry. In the New Year Fr Dominic will initially discuss this with Fr Martin Boland, at the Cathedral, with a view to broadening this conversation with interested people from across the partnership and Cathedral parish.

We very much hope that young people feel welcomed, accepted and nurtured within the partnership; we will work hard to ensure that they have a voice in partnership decisions. Over time we hope that those who work with the PPYC would help to nurture the next generation across the partnership, in a range of social and prayerful activities.

As with each of the strands we hope to appoint a “lead” from each parish in this area – for this strand, two leads: ideally someone with experience in working with young people, together with a young person (aged 17-25), to help the partnership to shape this vital area of ministry.

Appendix

- **Parish Financial Summaries 2017-2019, with notes indicating the overall state of repair of properties within the parish (presbytery, church and – if applicable – hall).**

ST JOHN & ST ERCONWALD INGATESTONE – PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE

UPDATE FOR PARISH PARTNERSHIP

SUMMARY MOVEMENTS, BALANCES AND CASH POSITION

	Cash Balance
Start FY 2017	-£36,096
Start FY 2018	-£31,940
Start FY 2019	£-35,896
Current	£-34,906

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- The cash position has remained consistent over the time period reported. It should be noted that during this period, a loan is being repaid, £500 monthly (£6,000 annually). This impacts on the cash balance. The loan will be repaid in full by April 2022.
- There is a continued focus on income generation across regular donations, gift aid participation and social events. Costs are under constant review.
- To enable this we:
 - Established a finance committee that meets at least 3 times annually.
 - Use the Finance Coordinator software for accounting and reporting.
 - On line banking with HSBC
 - Parish Pastoral Council meets regularly and considers all matters of the Parish
 - Have a parish admin who is financially adept and assists the parish finance committee greatly
 - Publish financials on the parish website. Also Gift Aid explained with templates of a GAD and Standing Order form
 - Finance report at Parish AGM

OUR SITUATION

- The repayment of a loan impacts the cash balance. This will improve when the loan is fully repaid in 2022.
- Finances are under scrutiny by the Finance Committee and subsequently the Parish Pastoral Council.
- The presbytery is in need of refurbishment and discussions are under way on how best to achieve this.

INCOME

- Income principally consists of:
 - Regular donations from approx. 100-120 parishioners supported by a high participation in gift aid scheme
 - Social activity includes church quiz and a few dinners to coincide with feast days
 - ICW also contribute through cake sales and raffles
 - Income from Monthly Parish Maintenance Gift Aid envelopes is ring fenced for maintenance
- Last year donations were received

FY2018	Actual
Regular Income	£ 41,680.38
“One Off” Income	£ 7,924.65
Gift Aid Rebate	£ 7,727.29
Charitable Activities	£ 1,815.23
Social Activities	£ 4,123.34
Rental/Miscellaneous Income	£ 825.00
TOTALS	£64,095.89

EXPENDITURE

- The majority of expenditure is “fixed”.
- Salaries, pensions & travel costs cover parish priest, parish administrator & housekeeper (both part time).
- Expenditure on variable costs is discussed in the Finance Committee and approval sought.

	Actual
Salaries, pensions and travel costs	£21,424.46
Housekeeping	£5,900.93
Quotas, fees and fund raising	£12,231.43
Liturgical	£1,996.26
Rates and Utilities	£8,183.21
Repairs and Maintenance	£1,915.28
Sundries	£10,400.21
TOTALS	£62,051.80

OUR PROPERTY

- Ingatestone parish consists of the Church & Presbytery which are directly linked through the sacristy.
- The Church roof was repaired a couple of years ago and the heating was replaced as well.
- A Church Fabric and Maintenance Committee was set up following a wide ranging Health and Safety audit. A Monthly Parish Maintenance Fund Gift Aid envelope was instigated and funds received are ring fenced for maintenance.
- The Presbytery is in need of significant refurbishment.

ST HELEN'S ONGAR AND ST MARGARETS DODDINGHURST – PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE

UPDATE FOR PARISH PARTNERSHIP

SUMMARY MOVEMENTS, BALANCES AND CASH POSITION

	Cash Balance
Start FY 2017	-£12,158
Start FY 2018	-£4,308
Start FY 2019	£8,908
Current	£6,181

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- We have made excellent progress in a short space of time shifting the parish from being loss making and in debt to cash positive and with a cash surplus.
- This was achieved with a parish wide effort on income generation across regular donations, gift aid participation and additional social events. In addition we focused hard on our costs being prudent with spending across all elements of parish life.
- To enable this we:
 - Established a finance committee that meets quarterly and advises Father Emile
 - Utilise the Finance Coordinator software to manage and record actuals to provide transparency and simple reporting
 - Create, agree and manage to an annual budget for all line items
 - Established processes for expenditure sign off and control for high ticket cost items
 - Have a dedicated long term plan on property maintenance so as to manage these substantive costs
 - Have a parish admin who is financially adept and assists the parish finance committee greatly
 - Publish quarterly to the parish our results at sufficient level of detail for transparency

OUR SITUATION

- The parish at year end 2018 had a positive cash balance of over £9k in the church's general fund. This currently stands at £5.9k end of q1 2019 with gift aid rebate of over £12k outstanding.
- Outside of major unforeseen events we are confident the parish finances remain now stable and are currently self-sustaining.
- We have commenced this year a more active property maintenance programme beginning with the Presbytery in Ongar (much needed as a result of several years of under investment). We believe it will take us a further 3-4 years to complete all the major elements of that programme across both sites.
- We have a stated objective to build cash reserves of £10,000 as we foresee at some point the need to replace the roof at Doddinghurst and believe that this is a healthy cash reserve to maintain in the event of any major issues

INCOME

- Our income is well balanced across:
 - Regular donations from approx. 100-120 parishioners supported by a high participation in gift aid scheme

- A positively contributing social event calendar with Christmas bazaar and Strawberry fayre being the major financial contributors to the parish annually
- Income from rental of the hall to various local groups
- Last year we were lucky enough to receive some one off donations & legacies to supplement income

FY2018	Actual
Regular Income	£ 50,430.66
“One Off” Income	£ 6,794.34
Gift Aid Rebate	£ 12,099.21
Charitable Activities	£ 1,499.23
Social Activities	£ 9,614.40
Hall Income	£ 14,052.50
TOTALS	£ 94,490.34

EXPENDITURE

- Over the last few years we have managed our costs tightly. We have tidied up 3rd party contracts to simplify items like printing & photocopying. We have moved all our power supplies over to Diocesan centrally negotiated contracts to release some savings although these costs look set to continue to increase over time. The dual location of our parish means we need to pay rent & rates on both properties.
- Our salaries cover parish priest, parish administrator and housekeeper (both part time).
- We have budgeted for £7.2K this year of maintenance work on our properties.

	Actual
Salaries, pensions and travel costs	£31,068.86
Housekeeping	£7,439.85
Quotas, fees and fund raising	£16,853.44
Liturgical	£2,055.10
Rates and Utilities	£11,163.69
Repairs and Maintenance	£5,509.37
Sundries	£6,273.35
TOTALS	£80,363.66

OUR PROPERTY

- We have 2 sites in the parish.
- The site at Ongar consists of the Church and The Presbytery which are directly linked through the sacristy. The Church roof was repaired for a major leak last year and outside of some day to day maintenance and much needed decorating is in good condition. The Presbytery is need of some more intensive work having been under invested in for some time. The property is listed.
- The site at Doddinghurst consists of the church which is converted into a hall during the week to be rented out. The grounds are more substantive requiring regular maintenance. The hall is in good condition albeit we expect the flat roof structure to need replacement at some point within the next 5-10 years. The site sits under a covenant requiring it to be used for regular Catholic services.

ST JOSEPH THE WORKER, HUTTON

PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW FOR PARISH PARTNERSHIP

SUMMARY OF CASH POSITION

	Cash Balance
Start FY 2017	£ 35,249
Start FY 2018	£ 7,501
Start FY 2019	£ -10,490
Current	£ -13,189

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- Outgoings exceeded income by £43K during the two years 2017-2018 due in the main to extraordinary expenditure on the presbytery. Following discussions with the diocese it was agreed that leaks and wear and tear in the conservatory required remedial work which totalled some £37,700 which was funded by an overdraft at the bank.
- A small number of donations received in 2018 and 2019 offset these costs, however in the main the work was and is funded by through the offertory.
- Replacement and on-going maintenance of hall and church heaters, electrical surveys and works totalled more than £4,500.
- Repairs and marking of the car park totalling £4,560 was completed; these works were funded by a donation from a parishioner.
- Utility costs have been particularly high and have increased over the past two years, although some refunds for duplicate bills is expected.
- We expect to achieve a tax refund of £8K for the year 2018-2019.
- We set-up a loose plate counting process to improve our compliance standing.
- A repository sale moved stock and realised income from expenditure made in prior financial years.

OUR SITUATION

- We are in a reasonable financial position, although work is needed to increase income so we can pay off the overdraft and regain our annual surplus in order to maintain parish buildings and invest in the parish.
- Standing order income totalled £19,345 in 2018-2019 with 55 regular donors. Additional income of £2,095 was received from 10 parishioners using envelopes. All new Gift Aid donors are asked to use standing orders.
- We will reinvigorate the Parish Finance Committee with the following objectives:
 - Formulate a strategy for the parish to 2023, taking into account the changes likely to result from the change to our partnership
 - Agree a budget for 2020-2021 and identify any extraordinary expenditure well in advance
 - Present a statement of the parish finances in April 2020 and each year thereafter
 - Review all expenses and identify areas where optimisations can be made
 - Increase parish offertory income by approximately £7,000 per year:
 - Initiate a drive to increase donations by £5 per month on average

- Increase the number of regular Gift Aid donors from 70 to 85 by end of the financial year 2010-2021
- Increase hall income through discussion with the partnership and advertising availability at masses and in newsletters
- We will identify uses for the parish hall which remains unused most days following the closure of the pre-school – this is an opportunity for the partnership to leverage this significant asset and we will open up discussions regarding its use early in 2020.

INCOME

- 59% of donations to the church are gift aided. 57% of donations are received by monthly standing order. We wish to improve both by 15%.
- We need to explain the benefits to parishioners of increased giving and making legacies to the church.
- We would like to improve our income from fund raising/social events using the parish hall.

FY2018	Actual
Regular Income	£ 37,459
"One Off" Income	£ 11,364
Gift Aid Tax Refund	£ 8,614
Second Collections Income	£4,040
Social Activities	£ 1,224
TOTALS	£62,701

EXPENDITURE

- Members contribute on a voluntary basis. Salaries are for the Priest.
- Housekeeping is on an hourly weekly visit basis.
- Number of important expenses are laid down by the diocese. There is scope to reduce expenses further, at parish level, to be reviewed by the Finance Committee.

Actual	
Salaries, pensions and travel costs	£ 6,056
Housekeeping	£ 4,329
Quotas, fees and fund raising	£ 11,934
Second Collection Funds (Inc. Tax Refund)	£ 2,219
Liturgical	£ 5,678
Rates and Utilities	£13,788
Repairs and Maintenance	28,970
Sundries	£1,805
TOTALS	£ 74,779

OUR PROPERTY

- The parish consists of the church, school, parish hall and presbytery.
- The presbytery is in excellent condition, the hall and church will require on-going maintenance.

OUR LADY & ST JOSEPH, STOCK PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW FOR PARISH PARTNERSHIP

SUMMARY OF CASH POSITION

	Cash Balance
Start FY 2017	£ 52,122
Start FY 2018	£ 57,793
Start FY 2019	£ 64,746
Current	£ 66,536

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- Outgoings exceeded income by £8K in 2016 with the arrival of a full time priest. Average donations to church funds was £7.50. We established a plan to review expenses and to increase the level of donations.
- Set-up a Finance Committee; reviewing finance management, risk exposure, planning & strategy, opportunities & projects and compliance. We agreed annual budgets.
- Presented a Statement of Finances after mass in March 2017 and each year thereafter. We reinforced the need to raise average donations to £10 by 2020. Raised the question of legacies to the church.
- Achieved average donations in 2018-2019 of £9.65 based on 65 net contributors per week. Year on year donations increased by 14%.
- We switched utility suppliers at the end of 2018 with the expectation of saving £700 per year. We changed our boiler maintenance providers with the expectation to save a further £500 per year.
- We have maintained the church and grounds, including major works to the organ and repairs to the roof; some covered by insurance.
- We expect to achieve our goal for tax refund of £10K for the year 2018-2019.
- We set-up a loose plate counting Rota to improve our compliance standing.

OUR SITUATION

- We are in a positive financial position.
- We need to return the tax refund for second collections 2018-19; we received a total of £8.4K GAD tax refund. We are waiting to receive our claim on the small donations scheme, then we expect to return a total of £2k to second collection funds.
- We lost two parishioners this year who were major contributors, and although there have been some gains, we will lose about £3k per annum to church funds.
- We have some significant maintenance expenses planned for the church grounds (painting railings and lopping large trees), which we will spread over two financial years.
- We recently received a significant one off donation.

INCOME

- We will continue to seek an average donation of £10 per week to church funds.
- 65% of donations to the church are gift aided. 60% of donations are received by monthly standing order. We wish to improve both by 10%.
- We need to explain the benefits to parishioners of making legacies to the church.
- We would like to improve our income from fund raising/social events.

FY2018	Actual
Regular Income	£ 32,827
"One Off" Income	£ 5,438
Gift Aid Tax Refund	£ 9,903
Second Collections Income	£ 7,336
Social Activities	£ 930
Repository Income	£ 270
TOTALS	£ 56,704

EXPENDITURE

- Members contribute on a voluntary basis. Salaries are for the Priest.
- Housekeeping is on an hourly weekly visit basis.
- Number of important expenses are laid down by the diocesan. There is limited scope to reduce expenses further, at parish level.

Actual	
Salaries, pensions and travel costs	£ 13,216
Housekeeping	£ 3,346
Quotas, fees and fund raising	£ 9,942
Second Collection Funds (Inc. Tax Refund)	£ 9,351
Liturgical	£ 1,849
Rates and Utilities	£7,294
Repairs and Maintenance	£4,272
Sundries	£ 476
TOTALS	£ 49,746

OUR PROPERTY

- The church has extensive grounds and a cemetery.
- The Presbytery (Bishops House) is separate.
- Both are kept in good condition.