

1 DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

Forward and Outward Together in Christ

DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN

2004-2009: five year review

NAME Jim O'Sullivan

PARISH COUNCIL OF St Laurence's, Cambridge

When I arrived as Bishop of East Anglia in March 2003, I immediately set about a series of consultations about what should be the key priorities for the diocese during the the coming five years. This included discussions with the College of Consultors and the Council of Priests, as well as the 50 priests and deacons who attended the clergy study week in Merville in June 2003. The result was a new diocesan process, echoing Bishop Alan Clark's 1988 Pastoral Plan, and taking up where Bishop Peter Smith's later *Sowing the Seed* had left off before he moved to Cardiff. This diocesan process came to be called 'Forward and Outward Together in Christ'. Over the next year, every parish and deanery was involved in lengthy discussions based on papers I provided, and many people also sent individual responses. As a result, a draft version of a new *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* was presented to and approved by a joint meeting of parish priests and the Council of Priests on 1st July 2004, and promulgated by me as diocesan policy.

Five years on, it is time to review the plan, both in terms of its implementation so far in parishes and how we can build on and develop it over the next five years. It is also an opportunity for parishes to take a fresh look at the whole plan, and its policies and recommendations, and to share 'best practice' with the rest of the diocese.

The *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* is divided into five main sections, and includes a number of mandatory policies. This review is based on those policies, within the setting of the five sections. Everyone is welcome to go beyond the limits of this form and add further reflections. **All responses should be returned to me by Palm Sunday (5th April 2009).**

This review process will take place over the first half of 2009, and includes the following:

- (a) **Each Parish Priest** is asked to complete this review form personally.
- (b) Reviewing the *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* will be the topic of the **annual Synod of Parish Priests** on 14th May 2009.
- (c) **Every other priest and deacon** of the diocese also is invited to complete the form.
- (d) Deacons should note, however, that the review will be the main topic at the meeting of the **College of Deacons** on 7th March 2009 (i.e. well before Easter).
- (e) **The lay chairperson of each Parish Pastoral Council, Parish-in-Council or equivalent** is asked to complete this form after discussion at least one meeting of that forum. Copies of the form will be sent by post, and also by email to members of the Diocesan Council of Laity.
- (f) **Review of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan** will be the main topic of the **Diocesan Council of Laity** on 2nd May 2009.
- (g) **The Religious communities** of the diocese are also invited to send their responses.
- (h) Each **Diocesan Commission** is each invited to review their area of the *Diocesan Pastoral Plan*.
- (i) At very least, the section on clusters and mergers should be reviewed at a **Deanery** meeting.
- (j) In the light of all these responses and discussions, further review will take place with the **Council of Priests and College of Consultors**.

This is a very long document, designed to enable a thorough review. I realise that this process involves considerable extra time and work, but it is essential that we review and build together on all the work we have done together over the last six years. Many thanks to all of you for your help and support.

Rt Rev Michael Evans, Bishop of East Anglia (27 December 2008)

SECTION 1: A COMMUNITY OF WELCOME

MAKING WELCOME (see *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* pp. 8-20)

'Our diocesan policy is that the diocesan family and every parish community should be pro-actively welcoming to all. Every parish is asked to explore the very heart of the way in which it welcomes all. Hospitality must be our special care.'

Over the last five years, what has been introduced or tried in your parish to welcome the following people? Please give details, and highlight things which have worked well.

Newcomers (see *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* p. 11)

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 11, been implemented?

'Welcome' sign outside church

Yes

- v Multi-lingual 'Welcome' poster inside church

Yes

- v Welcome leaflets

We hope to introduce these following completion of the parish census, as a way of "capturing" new parishioners

- v Welcome packs

The current version is out of date, but about to be updated

- v Welcome card posted to newcomers

No

- v Visit from parish clergy to newcomers

Yes, if they ask

- v House Blessing offered

Yes- this is quite a regular occurrence

- v Social events for newcomers

Regular social events held, but not specifically targeted at newcomers

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

Less-active ('lapsed') Catholics (DPP pp. 13-14)

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP pp. 13-14, been implemented?

- v Distribution of diocesan 'Coming Home' leaflet

Yes

- v Parish outreach programme to lapsed

The RCIA programme is available to those who wish to renew their faith

- v Parish newsletter distributed to lapsed

- v Christmas/Easter cards distributed with Mass times

Times of feast day masses are advertised in the local villages

- v Occasional welcome adverts in local newspapers

No

- v Informal 'come and see' evenings

No

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

People from other countries and cultures (DPP p. 15)

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 15, been implemented?

- v Copies of Scripture readings available in different languages

No, but this has been discussed at the Parish Forum, and may be implemented once we identify the relevant languages.

- v All or part of readings at Mass read in other languages as well as in English

Yes- at the annual International Mass, and occasionally on other special occasions. Consideration is being given to stocking foreign-language mass books

- v 'Welcome' sign church in other languages

Yes- Outside and inside the church

- v Liturgical songs in other languages

Yes- African choir sings regularly. Hymns are sung in several languages at the international mass

- v English classes for migrants

No

- v Parish celebrations of other culture's festivals

Other cultures are regularly celebrated at the parish school. African evenings have featured as part of the CAFOD activities. A group is planning an Indian offertory dance

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others

People with disabilities (DPP p. 16)

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 16, been implemented?

- v Identify individuals responsible for implementing Disability Implementation Act.

The parish has an architect who has taken a lead on adapting the church for people with disabilities.

- v Full audit of facilities and activities to ensure access for people with disabilities

Automatic doors have been installed at the main entrance to the church. We are about to build a new disabled toilet, with improved baby changing facilities.

We need to consider how we can keep fire exit routes clear, particularly from the balcony

- v Make reasonable adjustments to ensure liturgy & community life is accessible to disabled people

A hearing aid Loop system is in place

- v Include parishioners with disabilities, seeking to remove all barriers

All entrances are freely accessible. Automatic doors in porch

- v Involve people with disabilities in ministries

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

A Deaf/blind school governor acts as a disability advocate

Potty, children's loo seat and step are provided.

N.B. There is currently no step-free access to the altar or the church garden

Older people, the sick & the housebound (DPP p. 17)

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 17, been implemented?

- v Home visits

Yes

- v Holy Communion to housebound

Yes

- v Social events for older parishioners

SVP/CWL organise a Christmas lunch for the elderly. There are regular Lent & advent Friday lunches

- v Parish newsletters & magazines, and diocesan newspaper, to housebound

Yes

- v Tapes of Sunday Mass to housebound

No

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

Children and young people (DPP pp. 17-19)

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 17-19, been implemented?

- v Involve children and young people as fully as possible in ordinary Sunday Mass
A box of liturgically appropriate resources for young children is kept in the church, including bible stories and puzzles, mass books, rosaries and icons. The repository also stocks a range of items suitable for children.
- v Build up group of parish altar servers (recruit, social events, etc)
Annual invitation to new servers. Thorough training provided.
- v Make full use of options and flexibility allowed by *Directory for Masses with Children (1973)*
Children are regularly given special roles in mass at Christmas and special occasions.
- v Children's Liturgy Group when appropriate
Yes- at 9.30 & 11.00 masses. 2 groups for different age groups. They often bring back a piece of work to place on the altar
- v Reasonably regular Youth Masses (see *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* pp. 67-68)
Yes
- v Youth activities for pre-school and primary school children
Mustard Seeds mother & toddler group has run for many years. There is a possibility that this will fold soon due to a lack of anyone to take over
- v Regular youth activities when enough young people
Has happened intermittently in past years, although currently fallow. Most youth activity happens in relation to the parish school
- v Encourage and enable attendance at diocesan youth events
Several young people have attended diocesan events, and world Youth Day
- v Catechesis for children not at Catholic schools
Saturday morning first communion preparation
- v Parish member of Diocesan Youth Council (aged 16-21)
Yes -2 members

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

Signs in place welcoming breastfeeding in the church

Baby changing facilities

All parishioners are invited to attend school masses

A renewed Diocesan Youth Service has been established since the diocesan process began in 2003. What is your assessment of that service? How would you like to see it developed (while accepting the limits of personnel and finance)?

The youth worker has been invited to meet the confirmation group

Single people (DPP p. 19)

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 19, been implemented?

- v Social events which ease involvement by single people

Monthly Parish lunches open to all. These have been well supported by all sections of the community

- v Special care for the widowed and bereaved

Nothing specific

- v Special care for single parents

"Seat Reserved" cards available for single parents at children's liturgy

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

The separated and divorced (DPP pp. 19-20)

Have any actions been implemented to ease involvement in parish life of the separated and divorced, within the norms of the Catholic Church? What 'best practice' can you share with others?

No specific actions

WELCOME AT MASS

'It is at Sunday Mass that our Catholic welcome must be most powerfully evident and experienced: before Mass, during Mass and after Mass.'

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 12, been implemented?

- v Welcomers at Sunday Mass

Yes- we have a large group of welcomers. We have made Welcoming the focus of recent Parish Forum meetings. The main focus has been on the 11.00 mass, but attention is paid to this at all masses. A group of Welcomers greet people and show them to vacant seats

- v Ushers if helpful

This is part of the role of the welcomers

- v Clergy greeting people at door after Mass

Yes

- v Hospitality after Mass (Tea/Coffee, etc)

Yes- always tea & coffee after 9.15 & 11.00, sometimes after 9.30. We have monthly bring-and-share parish lunches, open to all parishioners, which have been very well attended over the past year.

- v Care re welcoming ambience of the church (lighting, heating, sound, etc)

Good lighting, heating & sound system. New carpet, porch and balcony installed in recent years.

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

Cycle parking available beside church (but could be better and more secure, eg. Sheffield Stands)

We could improve our signposting of places like the confessional, toilets, baby changing etc.

SECTION 2: A COMMUNITY OF MISSION

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST (see DPP pp. 3, 6, 20-26)

'East Anglia is mission territory, and the Church of Christ is by nature missionary. Whatever else we do and develop in our diocese, our God-given mission to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to everyone in our region must remain our first priority.'

Evangelisation lies at the very heart of the *Diocesan Pastoral Plan*, and of the nature and mission of the church at parish, diocesan and universal level.

Besides building up parish communities which are welcoming and caring, which celebrate the Mystery of Christ in the Eucharist and other sacraments, and which proclaim the Gospel by their radiant witness, the call to mission also involves going 'outward' with the Gospel message, to the 'unchurched', to newcomers, to residents in new housing developments - to all who have yet to hear and respond to the Good News.

What 'outward' evangelising actions has your parish implemented over the last five years?

What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

**We have leafleted new housing developments in the parish
Distributed bibles to the community in conjunction with the local council of churches**

'A beacon of care and loving-kindness': CARING FOR THOSE IN NEED (see DPP pp. 22-23)

'It is diocesan policy that every parish community should be involved in some practical way in care for the poor and needy of their locality.'

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 12, been implemented?

- v SVP to be encouraged and supported

Yes

- v Creation of new caring group if needed (i.e. other than SVP, etc)

- v Ensure visiting of the sick

Yes- Parish priest visits

- v Ministries to support the bereaved

Yes

Lay hospital visitors

This is mainly undertaken by St Philip Howard parish

- v Lay prison visitors

Yes

- v Practical care for the homeless

The parish gives financial support to the local night shelter, where several parishioners also work as volunteer

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others

The Giving Tree at Christmas allows parishioners to contribute gifts to groups including the elderly, homeless, refugees and mentally ill

'A beacon of justice': WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE (see DPP pp. 24-25)

'It is diocesan policy that every parish should be actively involved in some way in work for justice and peace. This could be co-ordinated by a group (e.g. Justice & Peace Group, Human Rights Group), but the whole parish should be involved as fully as possible.'

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 12, been implemented?

v Active parish support for promoting sacredness of human life from conception 'from womb to tomb'

v Support for LIFE in particular

Unfortunately there is no local LIFE group

v Growing support for CAFOD

Yes- many parish & school events are held. There is a dedicated CAFOD noticeboard. There is active work on issues such as climate change, LiveSimply, as well as regular fundraising/social events.

v Regular sale and use of fairly-traded goods

Yes-every month after all masses. Fairtrade coffee & tea used after 11.00 mass. Other events are also held, eg cake sales, harvest festival produce sales

v Support for asylum seekers and refugees

Yes- several parishioners visit Oakington Refugee centre . Clothes collections are made for this

v Action on environmental issues

Live Simply campaign at church & school. Energy saving bulbs, insulation etc installed in church & school. Votive candle cases are recycled.

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

We feel we would like to do more on recycling?

We plan to consider how we can promote natural family planning through the Good Counsel network, and how we can maintain our Christian identity in a secular world

We have regular monthly petitions and prayers for prisoners of conscience

There is an active Pax Christi group, which organises events for Peace Sunday

BUILDING BRIDGES: overseas links (see DPP p. 25)

'Our diocesan 'twinning' with the Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang in Cambodia, and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, are integral to our diocesan life as we move 'Forward and Outward Together'. These links will be reviewed after five years in 2009.'

Is your parish twinned with a parish or community in either the Holy Land or Cambodia?

No

If 'YES', with which parish or community?

Please assess the present level of involvement and communication.

Are you happy for your parish link to continue?

If 'YES', how can it best be carried forward?

If your parish is twinned or linked with a parish or project other than Cambodia or the Holy Land, please give details.

We have strong links with the Fatima mission in Zimbabwe for many years. Regular financial support is given via Loaf collection. Sr Clara from the Fatima mission visits the parish from time to time.

Support is also given to a school in the Congo, with several fundraising events, and a visit by some parishioners.

The CAFOD group has links with a community in Bethlehem

If you have no current parish overseas link, is your parish interested to establish a new link with either the Holy Land or Cambodia? If 'YES', which is your preference?

At present we feel it may be more appropriate to focus on our existing links, although the CAFOD group is looking at the possibility of other links.

Overall, are you happy for the diocesan double twinning with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang, Cambodia, to continue for another five years?

YES

If 'NO', please give reasons:

Any further comments on this 'outward' aspect of our diocesan life?

'A beacon of light for all': COMMUNICATING THE GOOD NEWS (see DPP p. 25)

'Every parish is to appoint a Parish Communications Officer. He or she will be responsible for pro-active contact with local media (especially local newspapers) in order to achieve coverage for 'good news' parish events.'

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP p. 12, been implemented?

- v Each parish to appoint a Communications Officer

No permanent officer. Ad-hoc publicity was arranged by a parishioner for our Jubilee mass last year

- v Develop pro-active relationships with local press, radio & TV

Coverage was obtained of our Parish Jubilee last year in the local radio and press

- v Develop parish website

Yes- information is regularly updated. The Parish Forum minutes are always available. Further developments are planned

- v Make use of "What's on?" and church news sections of local newspapers

Not regularly

- v Place notice of Mass times in local hotels, guest houses, caravan parks, etc

Yes

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

Our parish magazine appears several times a year, and is widely distributed and read, including distribution to local churches.

SECTION 3: TOGETHER IN TRUST AND PARTNERSHIP

ONE PARISH TOGETHER (see DPP pp. 9-10, 28)

'A fundamental principle is that there are to be no 'priest-less' parishes in our diocese. However we organise our diocese in the future, developing lay leadership of local Catholic communities and enhancing the role played by permanent deacons, every community will be entrusted to the servant leadership of a priest appointed by the bishop as 'canonical pastor'.

Each parish is a network or 'cluster' of communities. Some parishes have more than one place of worship, and this will probably be the norm in the future with fewer priests. No matter how strong and distinctive those communities may be, each is a fully integral part of a single parish family served and led by its parish priest. No matter how many places of worship there are in a parish, the whole community should see the one parish church, after which the parish is called, as its centre. This understanding is reflected in the revised way of listing places of worship in the Diocesan Year Book (from 2005).'

What has been achieved over the last five years in drawing together the different worshipping communities in your parish?

Monthly Parish lunches- attended by worshippers from different masses.

Annual International Mass and party

Social events aimed at all masses. Celebrations on the feast of St Patrick, St Laurence

Has any consideration been given to the 'Parish Links Scheme' outlined on p. 66?

This was discussed at a Parish Forum meeting, but no action taken as yet

If so, what has been the result?

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

'Clustering': PARISHES WORKING TOGETHER (see DPP pp. 9, 26-27, 28-29, 63-64)

Our diocese is divided into parishes, each of which is a living cell of the body of the diocese. No parish can exist in self-sufficient isolation. Each is an integral part of the diocese, and needs to be open in welcome to other parishes. Collaboration among parishes is essential, not just because we need to but because it is part of what it means to be truly Catholic.

There is room for flexibility in the way we structure cooperation between parishes, and especially lay participation. In urban areas, the deanery will remain a valuable forum for lay people meeting and working together. In other areas, it may be better to focus on 'sub-deaneries' (clearly distinct areas of a deanery) or clusters of parishes. The best way forward needs to be decided locally. The deanery will remain a key structure for local coordination of both ordained and lay ministry (e.g. catechetics and youth work), led by the local Dean.

Within deaneries, and sometimes across deanery boundaries, two or more nearby parishes are 'clustered' to encourage the sharing of resources and closer collaboration, and to begin to prepare now for possible combination of such parishes in an imminent future with fewer priests.

Parishes in such 'clusters' are to examine how many Masses are really needed each weekend, and if possible to stagger Mass times so that neighbouring priests can 'supply' for each other when needed. ***What has been achieved over the last five years in active and fruitful 'clustering' with neighbouring parishes? (PLEASE NOTE: you will be asked later in this review to assess whether a re-alignment of current parish clusters may be appropriate)***

Weekly Latin Mass is held at St Laurence's on behalf of the deanery.

Confirmation preparation is shared with St Phillip Howard. There are also shared retreats

Catholic Women's League has members from other parishes

Weekly bulletins are shared with other parishes

Among other things, have any of the following recommendations been implemented?

- v Clustered parishes to share resources, personnel, etc as required
There is support from Blackfriars with Sunday Masses
- v Parishes in clusters to examine the number and times of Masses at weekends to enable cover for each other when required
All our masses are well attended. There is no scope for a reduction in numbers
- v Parish priests of clustered parishes to 'swap' on Sundays occasionally

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

All the Cambridge parishes are large and growing rapidly. We find it hard to see how we can contemplate any reduction in the number of parishes or masses

WORKING TOGETHER AS A DEANERY (see DPP pp. 27-28)

The deanery remains a key structure for strengthening the cooperation and 'communion' of local clergy and lay ministers.

The Dean is appointed by the bishop as his personal representative in an area of the diocese, and works closely with the bishop in coordinating the local ministry of priests, deacons and lay people. He has a key role in ensuring the gradual implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, and especially of the formal policies contained in this document.

Clergy Deanery Meetings

In each deanery, there are regular meetings of the clergy, priests and deacons, both diocesan and religious, of that grouping of parishes. All are expected to attend meetings and participate as fully as possible in deanery life.

Deanery Coordinating Catechist,

Each deanery is to appoint a Deanery Coordinating Catechist, whose role is to support parish coordinating catechists and to contribute to the development of catechesis and adult formation in the diocese as a member of the Commission for Evangelisation.

Each deanery is also to appoint the following representatives to diocesan commissions:

- **Both a clergy and a lay representative on the Diocesan Youth Commission. Their role is to help develop local youth work, and pro-actively to encourage and support parish involvement in diocesan youth events and activities.**
- **Both a clergy and a lay representative on the Diocesan Commission for Dialogue & Unity.**
- **A lay representative on the Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life.**

There needs to be flexibility as to whether the deanery, 'sub-deanery' or parish cluster is the best setting for joint activities and events: e.g. adult formation and training, sacramental preparation (especially Confirmation & Marriage), youth work, sharing resources, days of recollection & retreats, social events.

The same flexibility is required in organising opportunities for lay participation in discussion and decision-making at deanery level. The Deanery Forum may work better in urban deaneries than rural ones. Elsewhere, such gatherings might better take place at 'sub-deanery' or cluster level. It is essential, however, that there be formal structures for such lay involvement within each deanery. Each deanery is to organise an annual event with the presence of the Bishop.

What has been achieved in your deanery over the last five years to strengthen its effectiveness?

Although the Cambridge parishes cooperate on some activities, the general feeling is that Ely and Huntingdon/St Ives/Buckden are too remote for any significant Deanery-wide lay involvement

Have the following appointments been made to Diocesan Commissions from your deanery?

- v Deanery Coordinating Catechist – as a member of Diocesan Commission for Evangelisation

Yes

- v Clergy and lay members of Diocesan Youth Commission

Yes

- v Clergy and lay members of Diocesan Commission for Dialogue and Unity

No

- v Lay member of Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life

yes

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your deanery share with others

DEVELOPING WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP (see DPP pp. 29-34)

It is diocesan policy that we develop different forms of lay leadership in every parish and across the diocese.

Every parish is to have a Parish Coordinating Catechist, working with the Deanery Coordinating Catechist to ensure the best possible catechesis, adult formation, sacramental preparation, etc.

Has your parish appointed a Parish Coordinating Catechist?

Yes

What forms of lay leadership have been developed in the parish over the last five years?

There are many Parish groups which run independently of, but with the support of, the parish priest

Eg
Bible study
Eucharistic Adoration
Lenten & advent preparation
Support for overseas linked parishes
Cafod
Support for prisoners of conscience
Children's liturgy
Maintenance of the fabric of the church
Music group
Traidcraft

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP pp. 29-34, been implemented?

Parish Needs and Skills Audit

Yes- this is taking place at the moment

Training for specific roles in the parish

Training for welcomers, readers, children's liturgy, altar servers, Eucharistic ministers all takes place

v 'Parish Opportunities Fair' or equivalent

No

Any other actions or comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

ADULT RELIGIOUS FORMATION AND EDUCATION (DPP pp.33-34)

Diocesan Adult Religious Education Programme

The original discussions at every level of the diocese highlighted as a key priority the need for a diocesan programme of adult religious formation and education, delivered locally where possible. Over the last four years, we have developed and delivered the diocesan 'Learning Together' programme of study days, 12 each year on both teaching and pastoral issues. For those who wish, levels of the 'Diocesan Certificate' are awarded.

From the comments of your parishioners who have taken part, what is your assessment of this programme so far? Any comments and suggestions?

St Laurence's hosts Learning Together programmes. Parishioners have participated in these.

Several people are doing the Catholic Teachers Certificate

How can we better encourage parishioners to attend such study days?

Parish Adult Religious Education Programmes

Over the last five years, what adult education programmes have been provided in the parish? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

RCIA

Bible study

Faith sharing groups

WORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS (DPP pp.34-35)

What new ecumenical activities have been developed over the last five years?

The parish priest attends the local council of churches. St Laurences hosts events for Christian Unity week.

Parish involvement in the women's world day of prayer

Any other comments and suggestions? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

WORKING WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS (DPP p. 35)

What new inter-faith activities have been developed over the last five years?

Any other comments and suggestions? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

INVOLVING LAY PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING (see DPP pp. 36-37)

Diocesan Council of Laity

A Diocesan Council of Laity will be established, with one lay representative from each canonical parish. Such a representative will usually be the lay chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council or its equivalent, or that person's delegate. The Council will meet twice a year with the Bishop to discuss, be consulted on and contribute to the planning of key aspects of the life and mission of the diocese.

The Diocesan Council of Laity has now been established for four years, and meets twice a year, providing a report on a particular pastoral topic for consideration at parish level. In your view, has this been a fruitful addition to diocesan life? Any comments or suggestions?

We have ongoing representation on this. Reports are made to the Parish Forum

Has your parish made fruitful use of the reports on pastoral topics provided after each meeting of the Council of Laity?

We've had limited discussion- perhaps we could focus on this more in future

Deanery Forum

'There will be a *forum* or *fora* for lay discussion and collaboration within every deanery. This could be (a) one *forum* for the whole deanery (especially in urban deaneries); (b) separate *fora* for parts of a deanery; (c) separate *fora* in more rural deaneries for clusters of parishes, although still feeding into a single deanery report of some kind on issues for discussion.'

Establishing an effective lay body at deanery level has long proved difficult and rather ineffective in most deaneries. Some deaneries have now established regular meetings of the chairpersons of Parish Pastoral Councils as an alternative to the old Deanery Pastoral Councils.

What, if anything, has been established in your deanery, and how fruitful is it proving? Any suggestions?

Not aware of anything at present

Parish Forum

'It is diocesan policy that every parish have an established public *forum* of some kind to enable lay consultation and participation in parish pastoral life and planning. Parishes are left to organise what kind of arrangement is most appropriate, although this should be decided at an open meeting of the parish rather than by the clergy alone. The main options are an established Parish Pastoral Council and an open Parish-in-Council.'

The policy statement above has been qualified by the diocesan policy on 'Parish Structures for Lay Participation' which was promulgated in May 2006, requiring every parish to have an effective Parish Pastoral Council or equivalent, in line with the flexible approach of that document.

What is your present structure for such lay participation, and how would you assess its effectiveness?

Our Parish Forum- meets 3-4 times a year with attendance generally between 12-40. Has been successful in moving some things forward. It tends to be attended by a core of regulars, with new attendees from time to time. The Forum provides a good source of ideas, many of which have been put into practice, but others have foundered or stagnated due to a shortage of volunteers to take them forward. There is ongoing debate about the merits of a loose forum versus a more formal council structure

Does your council regularly discuss pastoral issues, such as sections of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and the reports from the Council of Laity?

Yes, on occasion

Any other comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

SECTION 4: TOGETHER IN PRAYER – LIVING THE SACRAMENTS

TOGETHER IN PRAYER (see DPP pp. 37-39)

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP pp. 37-39, been implemented?

Times of prayer as part of all sacramental preparation programmes

- v Further development of parish prayer groups

Emergency Prayer telephone line,

Eucharistic adoration group

Informal prayer groups

- v Parish lending library

Not at present- space may be an issue

- v Prayer intentions board or book at the back of church

There is a prayer board in the Narthex.

- v Parish celebration of the Divine Office (Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer)

No

- v Regular Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Yes

- v Scripture-reflection group

Yes

- v Parish days of recollection/retreat

In planning

- v Encouragement of involvement in diocesan pilgrimages (locally, and overseas)

Regular involvement in Walsingham pilgrimage, and the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes

- v Encouragement of use of spiritual direction

Any other comments and suggestions? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

RITE OF THE CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (see DPP p. 40)

'It is diocesan policy that the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (sometimes called 'Journey in Faith') is the normative process for welcoming unbaptised adults as well as baptised adults seeking reception into full communion with the Catholic Church. The Rite allows for flexibility in special circumstances, but every parish or cluster of parishes should have an RCIA programme in place.

Unless there is a very strong pastoral reason why this should not be the case, initiation or reception should take place at the Easter Vigil.

Unless there are insuperable practical difficulties, all Catechumens and Candidates from across the diocese should attend the Rite of Election at St John's Cathedral on the afternoon of the First Sunday of Lent, with their priests, sponsors, families, friends and members of their parish communities.'

Has the policy above been implemented in your parish?

Yes

What still needs to be implemented?

Any other comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

BAPTISING CHILDREN (see DPP pp. 41-43)

Welcome into the Church

'Baptism always involves welcome into the community of the Church, and this communal aspect of baptism must always be celebrated in some way. Baptism can never be a private ritual simply for the family and friends of those being baptised.'

Baptism Preparation

'It is diocesan policy that every parish provide a full and adequate preparation programme for infant baptism, and that attendance be required for parents having their first child baptised, as well as for others when appropriate. Godparents should also attend when possible.'

'The canonical requirements should be fully respected which require for an infant to be baptised that there be 'a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic faith.' If such a hope is truly lacking, the baptism should be delayed until the parents are ready to take on the serious responsibilities involved in having their children baptised (Canon 868). This is why the proper preparation of parents for the baptism of their children is so essential.'

Baptism in one's own parish community

'As a rule and unless a just reason suggests otherwise, an adult is to be baptised in his or her proper parish church, and an infant in the proper parish church of the parents (Canon 857.2).'

Godparents

'The canonical requirements regarding the choice of godparents should be respected. A godparent represents the Catholic Church, and must therefore be a confirmed, practising Catholic aged 16 or above (Canon 874). Other committed Christians may be invited to be 'Christian Witnesses' at the baptism.'

Have the policies above been implemented in your parish?

Yes

What still needs to be implemented?

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP pp. 41-43, been implemented?

- v Baptism preparation course of 2 or 3 evenings, or equivalent

The parish priest provides individual preparation

- v Baptism during Sunday Mass when appropriate

Yes

- v Public welcome at Sunday Mass for babies baptised outside Mass

Always mentioned in newsletter

- v Pastoral visit to home of baptised

Not regularly

- v Monthly weekday 'Buggy Mass' for parents with their babies & toddlers

Not specifically, but the normal weekday masses are attended by young mothers

- v Annual Mass or other liturgical celebration for all children baptised during previous year

No

- v First anniversary card to each child

No

- v Families encouraged to celebrate yearly baptism anniversaries

- v Provision of parenting sessions

No formal sessions, but Mother and Toddler group has been a source of support to some

Any other comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

CONFIRMATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE (see DPP pp. 43-44)

'It is diocesan policy that Confirmation will always be administered by the Bishop, except in danger of death, or when the faculty has been given to a priest to receive a person into Full Communion with the Catholic Church or to confirm for some other special reason.'

Age for Confirmation

'It is also diocesan policy that, except in the danger of death, Confirmation will be administered in secondary school Year 10 (the school year in which a young person reaches the age of 15) or above.'

Confirmation Liturgy

'All Confirmation Masses should be organised using the norms issued by the Bishop in July 2003.'

Has the policy above been fully implemented in your parish?

Yes

What still needs to be implemented?

Is the Diocesan Confirmation Pack being used in your parish?

Yes

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP pp. 41-43, been implemented?

- v Invite Bishop to meet Confirmation group before Confirmation

Yes

- v Establish post-Confirmation group and/or activities

Not regularly

- v First anniversary card sent to all confirmed

No

- v First anniversary reunion Mass

No

What is your thinking after five years of the change of practice in the diocese on the age for Confirmation, and our way of preparing for and celebrating Confirmation?

Any other comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

THE EUCHARIST (see DPP pp. 44-50)

Number of Masses

'Because of the community aspect of Sunday Mass, and our preparation for an imminent future with fewer priests, it is diocesan policy that there should only be as many places of worship and celebrations of Mass in each parish as are really needed rather than preferred. Priests need permission from the Bishop to say more than one Mass each day, and they may not celebrate more than three Masses on any day (with Sunday beginning on Saturday evening). See *Code of Canon Law*, canon 905.'

How has the policy above been implemented over the last five years? Is there still more reflection and decision-making needed?

Yes- support from Blackfriars with Sunday masses to limit parish priest to 3 masses

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP pp. 44-50, been implemented?

- v More use of prayerful silence at Mass

Sometimes

- v Training and commissioning of Ministers of the Word (Readers)

Yes

- v Provision and encouragement of Holy Communion under both kinds

Yes- this has been normal practice for some time

Any other comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

Celebrations of the Word and Holy Communion

'Only when the celebration of the Eucharist is impossible on a Sunday (either in the local church or somewhere reasonably near) can another form of celebration be used. In our diocese, with the current number of active and retired priests, a "Celebration of the Word and Holy Communion" should be used on a Sunday only in emergency (for example the sudden illness of the priest with no supply possible at such short notice). Permission must be sought first from either the Bishop or Vicar General.'

It should also be noted that Rome does not encourage the frequent use of such celebrations even on weekdays. The various ministries (leading the celebration, ministry of the Word, ministry of Holy Communion, etc) should be exercised by different people when coordinated by a lay person rather than a deacon.'

Has parish practice changed in any way over the last five years regarding such weekday celebrations?

No

First Holy Communion

'It is diocesan policy that First Holy Communion should be received in primary school Year 3 (the school year in which a child reaches the age of 8) or above. A child's readiness for First Holy Communion will be decided by parents, child, priests and catechists together. It needs to be remembered that First Holy Communion is a rite of deeper initiation into the life and worship of the Church.'

Has the policy above been implemented in your parish?

Yes

What is your thinking after five years of the change of practice in the diocese on the age for Confirmation, and our way of preparing for and celebrating Confirmation?

Parish & school preparation runs in parallel, and seems thorough and effective

Any other comments? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

First Holy communion is a big focus of celebration in the parish

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

'In our diocese, anyone taking on such a ministry must be invited by their parish priest; attend both parish training and a diocesan commissioning day; and be commissioned by the Bishop (for one year, renewable on an annual basis by the parish priest). Anyone in School Year 10 and above who has been confirmed may be a minister.'

Do you have any thoughts on this now well-established way of commissioning Extraordinary Ministers in the diocese?

Seems to work well. We have a diverse group of Eucharistic ministers

ANOINTING OF THE SICK (see DPP p. 51)

Does your parish celebrate an annual (or more frequent) Mass with the Anointing of the Sick?

Most years

Any other comments or suggestions? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

MARRIAGE (see DPP pp. 51-53)

Have any of the following actions, as recommended on DPP pp. 51-53, been implemented?

- v Further development of parish marriage preparation

Mainly done by the parish priest, in addition to a full day at Newmarket

- v Explore ways to support newly-married couples

- v Annual parish opportunity for renewal of marriage vows

No

- v Annual Marriage Jubilees Mass

No

- v Encouragement to couples to attend Diocesan Jubilees Mass at the Cathedral

Any other comments or suggestions? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

ORDINATION (see DPP pp. 53-57)

Ordinations at the Cathedral

'It is diocesan policy that all priestly and diaconal ordinations take place at the cathedral unless there is a very strong pastoral or personal reason for another venue. Any priest or deacon is ordained firstly for service of the diocese. A special celebration can later be held in the home parish of the person who has been ordained ('First Mass', etc). Because of the essentially collegial nature of ordination, all the priests of the diocese are to be invited to every priestly ordination, and all deacons (and their wives) to every ordination to the permanent diaconate.'

We await the first priestly ordinations, hopefully in 2010.

ONGOING FORMATION of priests and deacons

'All ordained ministers need ongoing spiritual renewal and formation throughout their time of service. This is not an optional extra, but a pastoral necessity (cf. Canon 279).'

A diocesan policy on the Ongoing Formation of Priests was agreed in 2005, and revised in 2006. Deacons have their own programme, but are also invited to some of the twice-yearly Ongoing Formation Days.

Any comments or suggestions?

RELIGIOUS (see DPP p. 57)

How are local religious communities involved in your parish life?

Support from Blackfriars with Sunday masses

Sr Pat Robb CJ is actively involved with refugees and CAFOD

Parishioners have attended prayer groups at the Dominican convent

Any other comments or suggestions? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

SECTION 5: FINANCES, NEW STRUCTURES, ETC

FINANCES (see DPP pp. 58-59)

'It is diocesan policy that there be full openness and transparency about finances at every level (parish, diocese, etc). Canon Law requires every parish to have a Finance Committee.'

Has the policy above been implemented in your parish?

Yes

Are annual accounts published for the parish?

Yes

Any other comments or suggestions? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

NEW CHURCHES (see DPP p. 61)

'Any new or replacement churches to be built in the diocese will require the building to be large enough to accommodate the entire Mass attendance at a single Mass, with room for projected growth.'

Any comments?

Possibly unrealistic given the likely capital and maintenance cost of a "super-church"

ST JOHN'S CATHEDRAL (see DPP p. 9)

'St John's Cathedral in Norwich is the Catholic cathedral for all of East Anglia, for every parish and every Catholic. It is our policy to develop throughout the diocese a sense of the cathedral being our Mother Church. More use will be made of the cathedral in diocesan life.'

Over the last five years, we have tried to give a greater focus to the Cathedral, including the celebration of extra diocesan events there (e.g. Celebration of Marriage & Family Life, Presentation of Diocesan Certificates, Memorial Service for Babies & Children).

Any other comments or suggestions?

The parish regularly sends a group to the Chrism mass. There has also been a suggestion for a school trip

STRUCTURES

This section should be discussed at deanery level.

Deaneries (see DPP pp. 59-60)

Various changes were made to deaneries in 2004, based on recommendations from clergy consultations.

Hadleigh moved from the Ipswich to the Bury St Edmunds Deanery.

Poringland moved from the Norwich to the Coastal Deanery.

Dereham moved from the Norwich to the King's Lynn Deanery.

A new North Norfolk Deanery was created from various parishes in the Norwich and King's Lynn Deaneries.

4½ years on, what are your reflections on the current deanery structures?

Recent changes have not really affected us directly. There is little sense of "belonging" to a deanery

Current clusters & future mergers (see DPP pp. 60-64)

As outlined on pages 60-61, changes were proposed for various parishes and Mass centres; these have all now been implemented, as have most of the proposals on pages 61-62.

Pages 63-64 of the *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* present a series of diocesan-wide clusters, to begin from September 2004. Page 63 gives a list of parishes likely to need to merge in the coming years.

Since 2003, the following parishes have merged:

- v Holy Apostles, Earlham, and the Cathedral
- v Burnham Market and Walsingham
- v Our Lady of Lourdes, Dogsthorpe, and St Peter & All Souls, Peterborough
- v Sacred Heart, Bretton, and St Oswald's, Peterborough
- v Cromer and Sheringham
- v Sawston and OLEM, Cambridge

Much work has already been carried out in parts of the diocese, notably Peterborough Deanery, and in all the parishes above, but this needs to continue.

Further mergers are almost inevitable during the coming five years. A few attempts have been made over the last couple of years to review the current clusters and proposed future mergers, but this now needs to be undertaken in a way which allows us to begin to move forward as required.

We can no longer leave this to a later date. Decisions now need to be made to enable forward planning.

Please look afresh at the proposed city and town parish changes on pages 61-62, and the proposed mergers on page 63, and related clusters on pages 63-64.

With what parish or parishes should your parish be clustered, with a possible view to eventual merger?

We are a growing parish, with full masses. It's hard to see any potential for mergers at the moment

How viable would such a merger be? What problems, challenges, etc would need to be addressed?

Once any new 'clusters' and probable future mergers are agreed, how can this be moved forward in a practical way?

If your present or past parish has already been through the merger process, what can the diocese learn from that process for future mergers?

Any other comments or suggestions? What 'best practice' can your parish share with others?

ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THE 'DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN'?

Perhaps more attention should be paid as to how we can meet the challenges of growing secularism in society

ARE YOU CONTENT THAT THE DIOCESE CONTINUES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, IMPLEMENTING AND BUILDING ON THE *DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN*?

YES..... NO..... If 'NO' please give reasons:

**Signed.....Jim O'Sullivan.....
Date.....27/3/09.....**