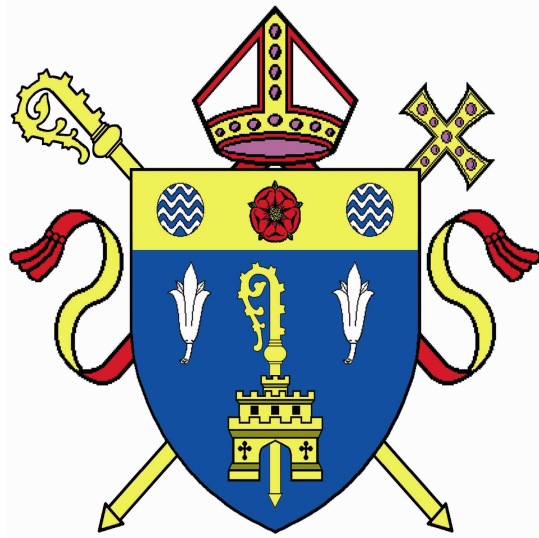


Fit for Mission?

*Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration,
Linking and Merging*



+Patrick O'Donoghue, Bishop of Lancaster

APRIL 2009

Issued from the Bishop's Office, Lancaster

Lancaster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees Registered Charity no. 234331

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

CONTENTS	Page
Introduction Fostering the Mission	3
Chapter 1 The Process of Change	5
1.1 The Meaning of Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging	5
1.2 The Parish	6
1.3 The Role of the Parish Priest and deeper involvement of the people	7
1.4 The Role of the Permanent Deacon in the Parish	8
1.5 The Role of Religious in the Parish	9
1.6 The Role of the Deanery and the Diocese	9
1.7 Impact on Catholic Schools	9
Chapter 2 Structures of Parishes – Overview	11
2.1 Parish Pastoral Council	11
◦ Liturgy	
◦ Catechesis and Formation	
◦ Social and Welcoming	
◦ Outreach and Mission	
2.2 Parish Finance Committee	13
2.3 Property Management	15
2.4 Parish Officers	15
Chapter 3 Practical Steps	17
3.1 Assumptions	17
3.2 Deepening Collaboration	17
3.3 Linking	18
3.4 Merging	18
Chapter 4 Where to get help and advice	20
4.1 Help with the process of change	20
4.2 Help with the development of the parish	20
Appendices	
1. The meaning of Deepening Collaboration, Linking & Merging	22
2. Constitution of the Deanery Pastoral Council	25
3. Constitution of the Parish Pastoral Council	33
4. Opportunities for Adult Education, Formation and Training	39
5. Parish Finance Committee Norms	42
6. Parish Property Management Handbook	44
7. Sample Job Description	55
8. Liturgical Issues, including a Mass of Closure/Thanksgiving	56
Acknowledgements	71

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Introduction: *Fostering the Mission*

Those involved in *Fit for Mission?* over the last 2 years have learned first-hand that we have a Diocese full of potential, and blessed with dedicated, hardworking priests, deacons, religious women and men, and our generous laity. Together they spend countless hours to bring Pastoral care to the more than 130,000 members of our Catholic diocesan community and the wider communities in which we live.

For various reasons the ratio of practising Catholics to priests is rapidly increasing. This has been shown to demand new approaches to ministry and a renewed encouragement of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Challenged by a growing militant secularism, change in ethnic diversity, and the slower pace of priestly and religious vocations, we will continue the mission of Christ in Lancaster Diocese by finding new ways to minister and confidently reach out in the Lord's own name. We must find new and better ways to develop participation by our laity in all aspects of parish life.

Fit for Mission? has confirmed that for us to strengthen the Mission entrusted to us in Lancaster Diocese we need to create new, enlarged and collaborative parishes in churches that are attractive, practical and easy to maintain. We need, too, imaginative Pastoral and spiritual facilities with adequate meeting space for our growing community needs.

Now that the parish aspect of *Fit for Mission?* has concluded, many are looking at the phased implementation of my decisions announced on 21/22 February 2009. This *Handbook* is offered as an aid in such a process of the deepening of collaboration, linking and merging of communities. As a local Church being made *Fit for Mission* – the mission of Jesus - we hope we can:

1. Ensure that all individuals throughout our diocese are graciously invited everyday to meet the Risen Christ and be changed by Him.
2. Continue to offer the invitation of Jesus Christ the High Priest to young men and women so that, in sufficient numbers for the future, they will follow Him in the Priesthood and the Religious Life.
3. Teach with love, clarity and conviction the truths of our Faith – the gift that Christ has entrusted to His Church.
4. Enhance the quality of parish life by encouraging collaboration and the sharing of resources amongst the parishes.
5. Strengthen and renew the mission and ministry of the Church in all urban, rural, and suburban areas.
6. Keep the Eucharist at the centre of our Christian lives, despite the difficulty of the diminishing number of priests and people gathering for Mass each Sunday.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

7. Act as good stewards of all the human and financial resources that will be needed for restructuring parishes and adopting new models.
8. Build a greater sense of unity within the Local Church of Lancaster Diocese.
 - Are we willing to take risks and be open to change?
 - Can we share power, leadership and decision-making?
 - Are we spiritually and financially healthy?
 - Can we be patient, flexible, and willing to compromise?
 - Are we willing to form new relationships?
 - Do we have enough time and energy to devote to the merger?
 - Do we have a commitment to grow both spiritually and numerically?
 - Are the priests engaged and supportive of the merger? Are they willing to work as colleagues?
 - Are we willing to accept the “other priest” or a priest not known to either congregation after our church merger?
 - Are we willing to accept any “fallout” from the merger?
 - Are we open to learning and working together with people who are racially and culturally different than we are?
 - Are we open to identifying and working on common mission priorities with the other church?
 - Do we have a willingness to reach people in the community who do not necessarily reflect the current composition of the Church?

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Chapter 1: *The Process of Change*

Change – *an act or process through which something becomes different* - is viewed in many ways. It can be welcomed, viewed with suspicion or rejected. Everyone reacts to change differently. Yet we all change on a daily basis. We grow older, we marry, we move house, and we change jobs. Nothing is static. But when a change, such as the decisions of *Fit for Mission?* are introduced many of us feel uncomfortable because the change was not our first choice or preferred decision.

To move forward with the changes of *Fit for Mission?* it is important to understand what we are moving from and what we are moving to. Parishes and their communities, clergy and laity have never been without change, but often it is unnoticed or just accepted un-reflectedly as part of life – the way things are.

This chapter sets out the potential structure of any parish, be it large or small, stand alone or newly merged. It is about the people and the systems which are needed to continue with the mission of the Church. The structure can be viewed as the skeleton on which the parish is built. There is no ideal parish, no absolute model to which all parishes should aspire. Each parish is and will continue to be unique.

It is not intended that all parishes will link or merge at the same time but over a period at least up to 2015.

Reference is made here to the *Code of Canon Law*, the law of the Church. It is this law – and the theology behind it - which helps us to understand what a parish really is, what are the rights and responsibilities of the clergy, the laity, the parish, the deanery, and the diocese. Parishes, Deaneries and the Diocese provide training and formation in a variety of ministries and subjects. These are referred to in Chapter 4.

The following sections describe some of the roles and functions, rights and responsibilities of the clergy and the laity. Chapter 2 then describes the formal structures which will enable these roles to be carried out.

1.1 The meaning of Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Throughout the process of the *Fit for Mission?* review there has been discussion about the meaning and implications of deepening collaboration, linking and merging between parishes. For many parishes, there will be three steps in the process of merging. For some, only the first or the first two will be necessary. The key to parishes engaged in deeper collaboration, linking and merging is an attitude of cooperation which results in finding opportunities for sharing resources to strengthen the missionary and sacramental life in each parish.

The processes can be described as follows:

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Deepening collaboration

This happens between two or more parishes and involves:

- 1 Coordinating Mass times, so one priest could if necessary cover more than one parish;
- 2 The sharing of some Pastoral, social and catechetical activities.

Linking

Linked parishes remain distinct, but do as many things as possible cooperatively especially in order to support the shared priest, who is striving to serve two separate parishes. Linking involves:

1. Complete coordination of Mass times;
2. Increased taking of responsibility by lay people for as many areas of mission as possible in order to reduce the burden on the priest;
3. Cooperation between the parishes in as many areas as is practical with joint committees and outreach programmes.

Merging

Through merging, two or more parishes become a single new parish. The new parish may retain more than one church, have Sunday Mass and other celebrations in more than one place, or have more than one centre for parish activities. Merging is a process of canon law: the new parish is legally a single entity. The new parish obtains the assets as well as the liabilities of the parishes which formed it. The old parishes are suppressed and a new one is established. A new name may be given to the parish which may be a brand new name or a combination of the former parish names.

The benefits and issues of these three concepts are described in Appendix 1.

1.2 The Parish

- i. All Christ's Faithful have the right and duty to preserve and foster communion with the Church by the profession of our common faith, the celebration of the sacraments and recognition of the Church's governance (*cc.206 &209*), observing in particular the teaching and policies of the Diocesan Bishop (*c.212§*)
- ii. Baptism leads to a "genuine equality of dignity and action among Christ's Faithful" (*c.208*). As congregations of Christ's Faithful, parishes enjoy equal rights, irrespective of size, location or economic status.
- iii. Appropriate Pastoral care is the right of every parish, to be provided by a priest, or, if necessary, by a deacon, an individual or group (*cc.515 §1 & 517 §*). About such arrangements and appointments the community should be consulted (*cc.524 & 50*).
- iv. As communities, parishes have the right to the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the word of God and the sacraments (*c.213*), and to worship in their proper rite (*c.214*). The Eucharist is to be at the centre of parish assembly (*c528 §2*).

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

- v. On Sundays and other holydays the obligation of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assisting at Mass wherever it is celebrated in a Catholic rite (cc.1247 & 1248 §1).
- vi. Each parish is to attend to its spiritual condition, to the growth and continual sanctification of its people and to the fostering of vocations (cc. 210, 214, 770; also 839, 1174 §2, 1186)
- vii. Each congregation has its own way of undertaking witness and service; apostolic activities, works of charity, (cc. 211, 215-216, 298-299, 384 §2, 839 §1), projects for justice and assistance for the poor (c222 §2).
- viii. All must work to ensure the divine message of salvation may increasingly reach the whole of humankind in every age and in every land (cc.211 & 770; cc233, 264, 791).
- ix. Every Christian Community has the right and duty to provide formation for new members and to assist all to grow in faith and love (c 217). Parents, priests and all the Faithful have responsibility for schools and education in its various forms (cc. 794, 788, 789, 793-798, 800 851).
- x. The Christian faithful, individually and collectively, have the right to make known their needs, desires and opinions to their priests and to one another (*Lumen Gentium* 37, cc.212 §§2 &3), and so to timely, accurate and complete information. *i.e.* The Fit for Mission process.
- xi. Parishes have the right, on their own authority, to acquire, retain, administer and dispose of their own goods and property (cc.1255-56) in keeping with the law (cc1257 & 1276). Each parish must have its finance committee (c. 537).
- xii. Individuals and communities can, of course, legitimately vindicate and defend their rights (c. 221 §§1,2,3).
- xiii. A parish has its own identity in law (c. 515 §3). It continues in being until it is suppressed or altered (c. 515§2 *as regards altering a parish*) by due process or ceases activity for 100 years (c.120 §1). However, as an existing public juridic person, a parish can be closed by a competent authority (*see canon 120.1*), amalgamated with other parishes to form a new one, divided up and joined either to other parishes or the parts made into new parishes (*see canon 122*).

1.3 The role of the Parish Priest and deeper involvement of the people

The Code of Canon Law (Book II, cc. 515-552) describes the role of the parish priest - priest or proper shepherd.

The parish priest is appointed by the bishop, and cannot be parish priest of more than one parish. His role is intrinsically bound up in that of the bishop. (The priest in charge (though not always resident) has all of the rights and obligations of a parish priest)

His role is defined in the canons under a number of headings:

i. Teacher and Sanctifier

This includes ensuring that the lay Christian faithful are instructed in the truths of the faith, especially through the homily on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; through catechetical formation; by fostering works in which the spirit of the gospel

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

is promoted, including social justice; taking special care for the Catholic education of children and young adults; bringing the gospel message to those who have ceased practising their religion or do not profess the true Faith. He is to ensure that the Most Holy Eucharist is the centre of the parish

ii. Pastoral Obligations: Governance

He should get to know the faithful of his parish; seek out the poor; foster growth in the Christian family; acknowledge and promote the proper role of the laity.

iii. Functions of the Parish Priest

The administration of :

- Baptism;
- The sacrament of Confirmation to those who are in danger of death;
- The Viaticum and the anointing of the sick;
- Assisting at marriages and giving the nuptial blessing;
- Performing funerals;
- Blessing the baptismal font during the Easter season;
- The more solemn celebration of the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation.

iv. Juridic Representation of the Parish

He represents the parish in all Juridic (legal – financial and property) affairs in accordance with the norms of canon law and he is to see to it that the goods of the parish are administered in accord with the norms of cc.1281-1288.

v. Residency, Vacation and Absence of Priests

He is obliged to reside in the parish house.

He can be away from his parish on leave for 1 month in each year, not including the spiritual retreat.

vi. Mass for the people

He must offer Mass for the people of the parish every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.

vii. Parish Councils

He presides over the Parish Council.

viii. Parish Finance Committee

He is aided by the Finance Committee in the administration of parish goods.

1.4 The Role of the Permanent Deacon in the Parish

The following is taken from the *Lancaster Diocesan Directory 2009*, pp85-86

'The deacon is an ordained minister of the Church, sharing holy orders with bishop and priest. The deacon is a sign of the Servant Christ, who came "not to

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

be served but to serve" (Mk 10:45), and who at the Last Supper washed the feet of his disciples: "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you". (Jn 13:15)

The sign of the Servant Christ is made visible in the deacon's work as a servant of the word: preaching, instructing, and teaching; in assisting with the celebration of the liturgy: he is an ordinary minister of baptism, he officiates at weddings and funerals; he engages in works of charity and Pastoral activity among the people. The deacon encourages and enables the laity to take their proper part in the Christian life. The deacon does not take over the work of the other members of the parish or diocese. He is meant to be a sacramental sign that we all must serve one another. The deacon is not a substitute priest. His vocation is to serve the Church in a particular way: not as a priest, but in a ministerial capacity in and with the people of God. He is given the grace of the sacrament of holy orders to fulfil his task'

The role of the permanent deacons in the parish, and in the wider diocese has been examined recently as part of the *Fit for Mission? Deacons* review, and its findings and ramifications are eagerly awaited.

1.5 The Role of Religious in the Parish

Each religious order brings a different charism to the parish, but all share certain fundamental qualities. The presence of a religious community provides a centre and powerhouse of prayer. Through their availability, they inspire in parishioners the love of Christ, and the confidence to carry out His work. They are a living reminder of the Church's and the parish's option for the poor. Evangelisation, the formation of adult Catholics, care of the sick, the elderly and the housebound, liturgical input, and the practical care of the church and sanctuary are examples of work carried out by religious orders. Each parish, through the clergy and the Pastoral council, can collaborate with religious in developing and adapting their particular gifts to the local community.

1.6 The Role of the Deanery and the Diocese

The diocese is a territorial arrangement of the Church within a country. It is headed by a Bishop. The diocese is divided into deaneries, which are a more local territorial arrangement of groups of parishes, each one headed by a Dean (Vicar Forane). Like the parish, each deanery should have a Pastoral council (Deanery Pastoral Council – Appendix 2) which helps to coordinate certain functions within its area.

1.7 Impact on Catholic Schools

Most, but not all, of our parishes have a single Catholic Primary School which is very much part of the life of the Parish. In newly merged parishes it is possible to have more than one Catholic Primary School in the new parish. The major towns of the Diocese are served by

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

larger Secondary Schools and Colleges which provide Catholic Education for the young people of a group of Parishes and Primary Schools. Each Secondary School endeavours to work together in partnership with its associated Primary Schools and Parishes. These partnerships are generally described as “families”.

In those places where the proposals call for closer working together among parishes or linking or merging, the Secondary School or College may be well placed to facilitate such partnerships. The Secondary School or College will already have experience of working with a number of different partners. If this has not been the recent experience among Secondary Schools or Colleges and their “family” of Parishes and Primary Schools, then this is an opportunity to establish closer links.

In those places where the proposals call for linking or merging of parishes which have their own Primary Schools, it is not necessarily to be expected that any of the Primary Schools cease to be used. On the contrary, the Primary School could become even more essential as the Catholic presence in a given locality. Where the case arises that a parish comes into existence due to a merger of two or more former parishes, the new parish may have two or more distinct Primary Schools. It may be opportune to consider the possibility that a single federated governing body be established. The schools within the federation remain individual schools but they work under one governing body. Having a single governing body, serving the single parish but more than one school, may help to promote the development of a single parish community which has a full sense of ownership of more than one school.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Chapter 2: Structures of Parishes – Overview

There are a variety of ways in which individual parishes work and no two will be identical. The make up of each will depend on the numbers of the faithful, the age ranges, the geographical location, the presence of schools in the parish, whether there are deacons and religious in the parish who may undertake duties which elsewhere are done by the laity, whether they are “linked” or “developing deeper collaboration” or have just “merged” and many other issues. It is important, however that with all of their individual charisms each parish, under the leadership of its parish priest or priest in charge, should have a basic structure on which its activities can be organised and supported.

This structure will include a Parish Pastoral Council with various sub committees or groups and the Parish Finance Committee with various sub committees or working groups. These are described briefly below, and their constitutions and terms of reference are included in the Appendices of this Handbook.

2.1 Parish Pastoral Council

2.1.1 A Parish Pastoral Council was recommended by Vatican II as one of the consultative bodies which should exist and it is thus promoted in the Code of Canon Law:

‘If, after consulting the council of priests, the Diocesan Bishop considers it opportune, a Pastoral council is to be established in each parish. In this council, which is presided over by the parish priest, Christ’s faithful, together with those who by virtue of their office are engaged in Pastoral care in the parish, give their help in fostering Pastoral action’. (Canon 536)

The Parish Pastoral Council will support the parishioners in furthering the work of the Church, so that they can respond actively to their baptismal call to mission.

In newly-merged parishes it is the responsibility of the parish priest or priest in charge to ensure that the membership of the new Parish Pastoral Council reflects the full composition of the new parish. Linked parishes will retain their own separate Parish Pastoral Councils, but they are encouraged to collaborate when this is Pastorally fruitful.

The norms, constitution and role of the Parish Pastoral Council are set out Appendix 3.

2.1.2 Liturgy

“The word ‘liturgy’ originally meant a ‘public work’ or a ‘service on behalf of the people’. In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in the ‘work of God’. Through the liturgy Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with and through his Church”. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1069).

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Liturgy refers to the public acts of worship in a parish; and is a work of the people, for the people. It is appropriate therefore that a team of parishioners collaborate with the clergy in the preparation of the liturgy. Through a deepening knowledge of liturgy, they would aim to celebrate the universal liturgy of the Church in a way appropriate to the local parish community.

The remit of this team would be to open up the liturgical year for the parish community, using drama, music, art to enhance the celebration of the Mass, and para-liturgies, such as Morning and Evening prayer, Benediction, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Way of the cross, Marian devotions, Taize prayer, etc. The Liturgy Committee, reporting to the Parish Priest, will have responsibility for ongoing liturgical training of its members and parishioners, the liturgical calendar, music, musicians, choir, sacristans, extraordinary ministers of holy communion, readers, altar servers, children's liturgy and any other parish activities connected with parish liturgy.

An essential part of the group's formation is a study and understanding of 'The celebration of the Christian Mystery' especially pages 247 -275 of *The Catechism*.

2.1.3 Catechesis and Formation

All members of the Church should be able to avail themselves of opportunities to deepen their faith and love of God through Adult Formation and Catechesis. In order for this to become a reality, the Diocesan Education Service is seeking to develop Lay Catechists at all levels, from degree level working Diocesan wide, through to the parish volunteers who work day to day in parish catechesis of any kind.

Catechist formation gives catechists confidence to deliver an effective and authentic faith and teaching of the Catholic Church within their own parishes. Catechesis will help adults to experience the transforming power of grace and to grasp the integrity and beauty of the truths of faith in their harmonious unity and interconnection – a true symphony of faith.

The Education Service is working to develop a Network of Catechists in order to communicate effectively and provide opportunities for development. It is planned that these opportunities will be based at a Diocesan and Deanery level.

For more information regarding the Catechist Network and opportunities for Adult Formation and Catechesis, see Appendix 4.

2.1.4 Social and Welcoming

One of the responsibilities of the Parish Pastoral Council is to support the **social life** of the parish and to **welcome** newcomers to the parish and visitors. This may be delegated to a sub-committee. The provision that is appropriate will differ greatly

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

from parish to parish. In every parish, however, the Parish Pastoral Council or its sub-committee should aim to support social activities appropriate for different age-groups and for both families and single people. They should take particular care to ensure a warm welcome to newcomers, arranging for them to be visited where appropriate, and give especial consideration to integrating into the parish and assisting those of other cultures, for whom English is not a first language. Where two parishes are being merged to form a new parish, it will be particularly important to organise social activities that will help the parishioners to get to know each other, so that the parish can truly become united. The provision of transport for those who need it to attend Mass and other parish activities would also suitably fall under this area of responsibility.

2.1.5 Outreach and Mission

In *Fit for Mission? – A Guide* (pages 18-21) I reminded the Diocese of the many ways in which we should all be striving to spread the Good News. Some of these focus on our own parish communities, others the surrounding neighbourhood and others further afield into all regions of the world. Since the Mission Review began in February 2007 all parishes have worked to identify their own mission priorities. Across the Diocese these have covered a wide variety of outreach and mission activity. These priorities must continue to be addressed as the *Fit for Mission* decisions are introduced. By continuing to work on these priorities the parishes, whether linking or merging, will be in a strong position to spread the Good News.

Examples of some of these Mission and Outreach activities can be found in Chapter 4, together with contact details for individuals and organisations who can be contacted for further help.

2.2 Parish Finance Committee

2.2.1 Canon (Church) Law requires that:

'In each Parish there is to be a finance committee to help the parish priest in the administration of the goods of the parish.' (C. 537).

The parish priest represents the juridical person of the parish in financial matters (*cf. Canon 532*). The Parish Finance Committee is a consultative body formed to assist him in the sound administration of the parish and is to be consulted before any major item of expenditure is incurred. The Parish Finance Committee advises the parish priest or priest in charge on the ongoing maintenance of the church, presbytery and hall as well as overseeing any building projects. They do this by clarifying issues and making recommendations enabling the parish priest to be fully aware of all aspects of parish finances when making any particular decision. Membership of this Committee would normally be for three years.

In newly-merged parishes it is the responsibility of the parish priest or priest in charge to ensure that the membership of the new Finance Committee reflects the full

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

composition of the new parish. Linked parishes will retain their own separate Finance Committees, but they are encouraged to collaborate when this is Pastorally fruitful.

Following diocesan norms, on a continuing basis the Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that proper records of income and expenditure are maintained and that an account of administration is made available to parishioners at the end of each financial year. The Finance Committee also has a responsibility to ensure that the parish income remains in line with rising costs. With this in mind the Committee continues to promote the Weekly Offertory Envelope Collection and the Gift Aid Scheme, which now makes a significant contribution to parish funds. Each parish will have collectors who assist with practical aspects of the Sunday Liturgy and organise the taking up of the collection, and counters who count and prepare the collection for lodgement in the bank.

2.2.2 Parish Collection

The collection taken up every Sunday at Mass is vital for the general maintenance of the parish and to help reduce parish debt. The weekly collections, by envelopes, standing order, cheque or cash are used solely for this purpose.

2.2.3 Gift Aid Scheme

Parishioners who pay income tax can increase the value of their contribution simply by having a Gift Aid Agreement with the parish. This allows the Parish to claim back the income tax already paid on the contribution at source. However, contributions must be paid either by parish envelopes, standing orders or cheque. Cash put on the collection plate cannot be included. The Gift Aid Scheme is simple to operate and can be done so at no cost or inconvenience to parishioners. For this reason tax paying parishioners are encouraged to use the Scheme.

The norms and constitution of the Parish Finance Committee are set out in Appendix 5.

2.2.4 The Parish Finance Committee may also consider the need to produce an inventory of assets, including:

- Relics
- Icons
- Sacred vessels
- Vestments
- Artworks and Valuables
- Furniture
- Memorabilia
- Documents , books and registers.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

2.3 Property Management

Over recent years parishes have been advised of the importance of forming property management teams to assist the parish priest or priest in charge in matters connected with church buildings and property. These include Health and Safety matters, including fire risk assessments, fire precautions and security, testing and servicing of electrical installations, heating plant and appliances, the engagement of engineers and other tradesmen, repairs, renewals and alterations, including the need for professional help, seeking approvals, obtaining tenders, managing projects and paying invoices.

The Guide for the use of voluntary workers appointed by their parish priest, or priest in charge, to assist in the upkeep of parish property is appended to this handbook (Appendix 6) or copies can be obtained from: **The Property Office, The Pastoral Centre, Balmoral Rd, Lancaster, LA1 3BT, Tel: 01524 596060 or email: property@lancasterdiocese.org.uk**

This document can also be downloaded from the diocesan website. It is a comprehensive guide to all aspects of parish work which can be undertaken by parishioners selected and appointed by the priest.

There are a number of other documents available on the Diocesan website, which should be used in conjunction with the property guide. These include:

- Health and Safety Statement
- Annual Parish Safety Checklist
- Management of Asbestos
- VAT Relief – Eligibility Declaration
- Property Form buying or selling
- Property Repairs or Improvements
- Fire Regulations
- Smoke Free Regulations
- Insurance Risk Management

The Annual Parish Safety Checklist must be completed annually. “A short guide to making your premises safe from fire” can be downloaded from the internet at www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk

2.4 Parish Officers

In all parishes there will be a number of officers or parishioners who have a particular role or function. Some may be paid employees, whilst most will be volunteers. Examples are: Secretary, Housekeeper, Local Safeguarding Representative, Organist, Choirmaster. Each parish will be different and not all parishes will have the same list of officers.

Where parishes are merging, each former parish may have an officer carrying out the same or similar function.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

It is important that people in these roles are clear about what is expected of them, who they report to and who (if anyone) reports to them. Many of the roles involve contact with children and vulnerable adults. The people undertaking these roles are, therefore, subject to both the statutory requirements and the Catholic Church in England and Wales' Policies and Procedures concerning the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

From October 2009 **all** people working with children and vulnerable adults will be required to register with the *Independent Safeguarding Authority*. It will be illegal to work with, or to employ anyone to work with, children and vulnerable adults, if they are not registered. In addition to registration the usual employment screening practices are to be carried out. For many people this also requires a CRB declaration.

For further information on these procedures contact the **Diocesan Safeguarding Commission on 01772 728433**.

Some of the roles have clearly defined responsibilities and functions. It is clear that, for example, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is commissioned to take the Blessed Sacrament to people in their own homes and if required to assist the priest with the distribution of Communion at Mass. Local Safeguarding Representatives have a clearly laid out job description (*National Policies on Safeguarding- Structures*).

Whilst some officers may think that they have a clear role, the perception of others may be somewhat different. To ensure clarity it would be advisable for all officers to have a simply constructed job or role description. This should include:

- Name of parish.
- Title of the office or role.
- The office or role to whom this person reports.
- The qualities (and in some cases qualifications) which the officer should have - ie the person specification.
- A list of the duties, or the main responsibilities, which the post holder will be expected to carry out.
- Whether the role is subject to the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Legislation ie ISA registration and CRB checks.
- The training available and which they should expect to attend.

For a sample job description see Appendix 7

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Chapter 3: Practical Steps

During the consultation period of the *Fit for Mission?* review there have been many questions about how to practically begin the processes of deepening collaboration, linking and merging. How do two or three parishes, or former parishes, actually get to know each other, start working together, and in some cases get ready to form a new parish?

3.1 Assumptions

1. The Paschal Mystery is central both to our faith and to this implementation process, where radical changes in parish structures are potential examples of the life-death resurrection mystery.
2. The Implementation of my decisions of 21/22 February 2009 will be an on-going process which will unfold over the next five to ten years.
3. As the implementation proceeds there may be times when the plans will need to be reviewed and adjusted in the light of changing realities.
4. Strong local Pastoral leadership, ordained as well as lay now and in the future, is needed for implementation to succeed.
5. All parishes will be more effective, if they work together to implement plans to conserve human resources and avoid needless duplication of ministerial and financial resources.
6. There will be more ownership of and less resistance to implementation of the final decisions of the Bishop (21/22 February 2009) because people were involved in the planning process and their suggestions were taken seriously.
7. Parishes will be stronger and more effective because they are implementing the Bishop's decisions together with a strong sense of unity and purpose.
8. Parishes do not exist for themselves, but as the vibrant presence of Christ and the Church to the local area.
9. The vision of Church must always be larger than one's own local community. People must be helped to think of the bigger picture when planning for the future of the Church in their local area.

3.2 Deepening Collaboration:

In this case it should not be necessary to form new Parish Pastoral Councils or Finance Committees. The action required will depend upon the activities within the constituent parishes but here are **some suggestions to get the process started:**

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

- Regular social gatherings of the constituent parishes.
- The exchange of newsletters, notices, activities and committee members names (subject to their agreement) with publication on parish notice boards so as to encourage integration.
- A forum made up of members appointed by the Parish Priest, of the constituent parishes to meet regularly so as to encourage progressive collaboration.

3.3 Linking

In this case the constituent parishes effectively share a Parish Priest or Priest in Charge. It is important that the constituent parishes work more closely together to coordinate all services and activities so as to ease the workload of the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge. Again it is expected that existing Parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Committees, would remain. In addition to the actions set out above in **Deepening Collaboration** it is suggested that the Forum made up of members of the linked parishes as appointed by the Parish Priest should:-

- Ensure that each separate parish has all relevant groups e.g. Liturgy Committee, Finance Committee etc., and representatives of each are on the Parish Pastoral Council.
- Review timings of all Masses/services within the separate parishes in consultation with the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge to ensure the priest can comfortably celebrate all Masses/Services.
- Publish all agendas and minutes of meetings in linked parishes.

Each parish via its Priest and Parish Pastoral Council/Property/Finance Committees need to consider whether as a result of the linking, all existing premises continue to be necessary or whether any (e.g. a presbytery), might be sold/let out. In the event that it is proposed that a property might be sold/let, application is to be made to the Trustees via the Diocesan Property Committee.

3.4 Merging

In this case the constituent parishes become one and soon a single Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee is formed and commences its duties. In the meantime it is suggested that the process is already commenced by encompassing the actions set out under **Deepening Collaboration** and **Linking** and that the Forum, made up of members of the constituent parishes appointed by the Parish Priest, meet so as to:-

- Establish a name for the new parish, acceptable to the Parish Priest and which requires confirmation by the Bishop.
- Establish a new Parish Pastoral Council in line with that set out in **Appendix 3** so as to include amongst its members, the Parish Priest, representatives of the principal activities of the parish including the Liturgy Committee, Finance Committee and other principal organisations/groups/activities within the parish.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

- Establish a new Finance Committee and Property Management Committee.

Thereafter, in conjunction with the Parish Priest, the Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee would:

- Agree and authorise the necessary signatories for a new Bank Mandate.
- Contact the Diocesan Finance Office who can make arrangements to:-
 - Open a new account with HSBC in the name of the new parish.
 - Transfer balances of existing bank accounts to the new parish bank account.
 - Transfer all standing orders/Direct Debits, regular credits, from the constituent parish account to the new parish bank accounts.
 - Close the 'old' parish accounts.
 - Order new cheque and paying in books
 - Respond to any further enquiries particular to the parish merger such as the impact on a parish club etc.

Additionally the Diocesan Finance Office should be advised of the names of the agreed parish bookkeeper and independent examiner for the enlarged parish

It should be noted that the existing supplies of Gift Aid envelopes can continue to be used. When a new supply is required, at that time, they should be ordered in the name of the enlarged parish. It may be appropriate to retain individuals responsible for Gift Aid in each Church within the parish.

Whilst parishes that are the subject of a merger will become part of an enlarged parish with a new parish name, individual churches will retain their old name - for the church alone. As such existing Birth, Marriage and Death registers can continue to be used.

It should be noted that for parishes with an effective merger date of Low Sunday, the old parish accounts should be closed as at 5th April in the year of the merger. For parishes with an effective merge date of the First Sunday of Advent, the 'old parish accounts' should be closed as at 30th November in the year of the merger.

The new Parish Pastoral Council, and their parish priest, should consider whether, as a result of the merger, all existing premises continue to be necessary, or whether any (ie presbytery) might be sold or rented out. In the event that it is proposed that any property might be sold or rented, application should be made to the Trustees, via the Diocesan Property Committee.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Chapter 4: Where to get help and advice

4.1 Help with the process of change

Advice on the financial and property issues, and on the storing, cataloguing, disposing or redistributing of parish assets should be sought from the Diocesan Property Office and the Diocesan Finance Office, The Pastoral Centre, Balmoral Road, Lancaster LA1 3BT.

Mass Times

The parish priest or priest in charge should consult with the other parishes in the deanery and also the Diocesan Bishop before fixing Mass times.

Advice about liturgies to mark the merging of a parish

Fr G Steel Tel: (01228) 526765 Email: geoffrey.steel@zetnet.co.uk

Setting up a Stewardship Scheme to encourage participation in lay ministries

Canon A Hayes Tel: (01253) 873609

Email: stwulstan.fleetwood@helloworld.co.uk

Fr C Cousens Tel: (01253) 853340

Mr S Stewart Tel: (01253) 396286 ext 6235

Postal address: c/o St Mary's Catholic College, St Walburga's Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 7EQ

Email: simonstewart@st-mary.blackpool.sch.uk

Canon Law

Diocesan Judicial Vicar: Mgr Michael Tully Tel: (01524) 719628.

4.2 Help with development of the parish

Diocesan Safeguarding Commission (formerly the Diocesan Protection Commission)

The Diocesan Safeguarding Commission is appointed by the Bishop to advise him on all matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The Commission is made up of a number of experts in the fields of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, supported by a Diocesan Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Diocesan Safeguarding Officers. They co-ordinate the work of the Local Parish Safeguarding Representatives, provide training on safeguarding issues and assist in the investigation of allegations.

The Commission is based at 218 Tulketh Road, Ashton, Preston, PR2 1ES, telephone 01772 728433; email; dpolancaster@btconnect.com

Faith Formation and Adult Education.

For all aspects of faith formation and adult education contact:

Head of Diocesan Education Services: Fr Luiz Ruscillo, Tel: (01524) 841190

Email: Luiz.Ruscillo@lancasterrcdiocese.org.uk

See also Appendix 4

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Vocations

Vocations Director: Fr Emmanuel Gribben, Tel: (01946) 810324

Email: e.gribben@merseymail.com

Fr Gribben is the Vocations Director for the diocesan priesthood and is also willing to give initial advice to anyone who may be interested in joining a religious order.

Youth Activities

Diocesan Youth Chaplain: Fr Philip Conner, Diocesan Youth Office: Tel: 01524 596063

Email: youthoffice@lancasterrcdiocese.org.uk.

Liturgical Music

Canon Stephen Shield Tel: (01524) 384820 Email: clergy@lancastercathedral.org.uk

Fr Paul Johnstone Tel: (01772) 683664 Email: thewillowschurch@btinternet.com

The Meaning of Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Deepening collaboration

This is between two or more parishes and involves:

- Coordinating Mass times, so one priest could if necessary cover more than one parish.
- The sharing of Pastoral, social and catechetical activities.

Benefits:

- An increased sense of the parish being part of the wider Church.
- Adequate coverage of Masses to allow for priests' absence due to sickness or holiday.
- Greater choice of Mass times for all those who are able to travel.
- Possibilities for a wider range of Pastoral, social and catechetical activities, since there will be a larger group of parishioners to support them.

Disadvantages:

- Temporary inconvenience for some due to changed Mass times.

Needed for the process:

- Good communications between the parishes, and a satisfactory procedure for coming to shared decisions.

Linking

Linked parishes, which remain distinct, do as many things as possible cooperatively specially in order to support the shared priest, who is striving to serve two separate parishes. Linking involves:

- Complete coordination of Mass times;
- Increased taking of responsibility by lay people for as many areas of mission as possible in order to reduce the burden on the priest;
- Cooperation between the parishes in as many areas as is practical. Joint committees and outreach programme.

Benefits by comparison with deepening collaboration:

- The possibility of serving both the parishes in question, given the reduced numbers of clergy.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

- The taking-on of greater responsibility by lay people, which could strengthen the parish's mission in the long run.
- Greater collaboration, meaning that a greater number of people will be available to lead and participate in different activities, as well as there being greater collective energy and imagination; this may create a critical mass to make some extra activities possible. Unnecessary duplication of work can be avoided, and they can benefit each other through their different strengths.

Benefits by comparison with merging:

- The maintaining of a local community based on the parish, where it is not possible or appropriate to form a single larger parish community. This is particularly relevant where the churches are not geographically close.

Needed for the process:

- Good communication between the parishes and a procedure for coming to shared decisions.
- A positive rather than simply minimalist attitude to the potential for collaboration.
- Attentiveness to ensure that the priest is not over-worked.

Merging

Through merging, two or more parishes become a single new parish. The new parish may retain more than one church, have Sunday Mass and other celebrations in more than one place, or have more than one centre for parish activities. The future of redundant buildings is to be negotiated by the new parish community with the Bishop and Trustees. Merging is a process of canon law: the new parish is legally a single entity. The new parish obtains the assets as well as the liabilities of the parishes which formed it. The old parishes are suppressed and a new one is established. A new name may be given to the parish (but not normally the church buildings) which may be a brand new name or a combination of the former parish names. The Bishop confirms the choice of name.

Benefits by comparison with linking:

- A more viable parish situation, which would normally result where a merger is done sensitively and cooperatively.
- Larger numbers of parishioners, so that for all aspects of the parish's mission more people will be available to lead and participate in activities. Where a small parish cannot sustain, for example, a youth group or RCIA course, or extra liturgical events, it may be possible for the larger parish may be able to do so. The different strengths of the original parishes can be pooled to benefit the larger whole.
- Only one set of officers or committees are needed to cover each area of responsibility. Work will not need to be duplicated and there will be a larger pool of potential volunteers for each task.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

- A great simplification of administrative work for the priest, since all official paperwork needs to be done only once.

Possible disadvantages in comparison to linking:

- The disruption of a strong local community in an area where it will be difficult to form a strong sense of community within a new parish. This would particularly apply where the parishes are not geographically close.

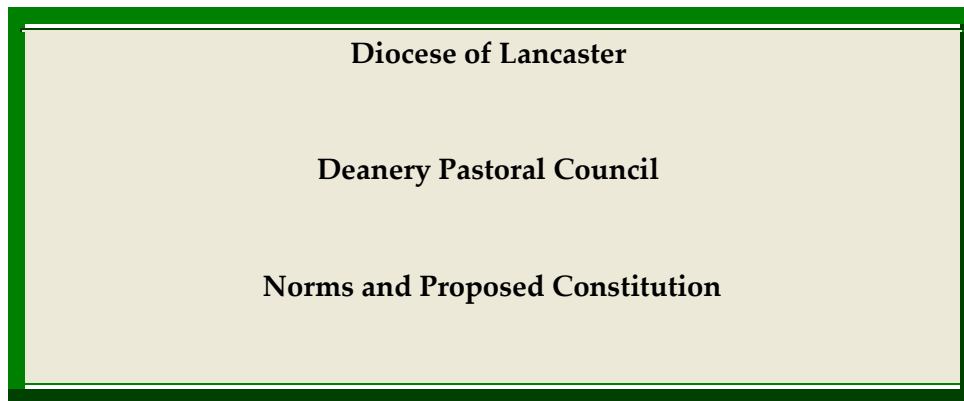
Needed for the process:

- Good communication between the original parishes to set up a formal procedure for creating new structures.
- Shared prayer, social activities and planning during all stages of the process.
- Care to avoid one parish taking over the other rather than a genuine process of merging.
- Care to ensure that those individuals who have served the original parishes in any way are given the opportunity to continue their service in the new parish.

Finally....

The key to parishes engaged in deeper collaboration, linking and merging is an attitude of cooperation which results in finding opportunities for sharing resources to strengthen the missionary and sacramental life in each parish.

Constitution of Deanery Pastoral Council



Deanery Pastoral Council

Norms and Proposed Constitution

Lancaster Diocese

Foreword

“In the Diocese, as far as possible, there should be councils which assist the apostolic work of the Church in the field of evangelisation and sanctification, or in the charitable, social or other spheres. To this end, clergy and religious should appropriately co-operate with the laity. Councils of this type should be established as far as possible also on the Parish, inter-parish and inter-diocesan level as well as in the national or international sphere.”

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Chapter V, 26

Two basic principles that are emphasized throughout the documents of the Second Vatican Council are: First, the principle of **collegiality** or the co-responsibility of every member of the Church in planning and carrying on the work of Christ in our midst. Second is the principle of **subsidiarity** or the granting to the local Church a greater voice in the decisions that will affect its life and mission as a Christian Community. Both of these principles are close to my heart and essential for the future Mission of our Diocese; praying and working together.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Role of Parish Co-operation and Sharing of Resources

I would hope that a Deanery Pastoral Council would aim to:

- Initiate, at deanery level, the promotion of the vitality of parish life and parish sharing.
- Maintain a current diocesan and deanery calendar of shared events.
- Determine which parish activities would be more effective on an inter-parish basis.
- Provide assistance to parishes in sharing and clustering.
- Bring together leaders of neighbouring parishes for fellowship and exchange of concerns and ideas.
- Identify common needs among parishes.
- Identify areas where duplication exists.
- Identify activities, programs and events that parishes could share with each other.
- Coordinate Mass times across the Deanery.

Deanery

- The Deanery Pastoral Council forms with the Dean, a Pastoral body to facilitate collaboration among the parishes within the deanery.
- Deanery Pastoral Councils bridge the gap between parish and diocese, enabling Catholics to experience the Diocese as a community of faith, fulfilling the Mission of Christ.
- Deanery Pastoral Councils serve as a forum for reflecting on Pastoral needs that are common to parishes in the Deanery. They will foster inter-parish collaboration maintaining communication with the Parish Pastoral Councils and the local Clergy.
- Deanery Pastoral Councils provide a structure that enables all members of the Body of Christ, clergy, laity and religious to share their wisdom in the services of the Church.

Deanery Council and the Dean.

The Council serves in a consultative capacity to the Dean and the local Clergy, sharing in their responsibility for fostering collaboration among the parishes of the Deanery.

Deanery Pastoral Council and the Parish Pastoral Councils.

As a resource planning group the Deanery Pastoral Council provides opportunities for Parish Pastoral Councils and local Clergy to share learning experiences, resources and ideas.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

A Deanery Pastoral Council helps Parish Pastoral Councils develop a sense of Deanery identity.

Ongoing communication and open dialogue between the Deanery Pastoral Council and the Parish Pastoral Councils strengthen the capacity for effective collaboration between parishes in the Deanery.

Formation/Education of Deanery Pastoral Council Members.

Ongoing education and spiritual formation are essential to the life of the Deanery Pastoral Council and its capacity to function effectively.

Orientation of new members and the executive committee is done annually.

Education includes studying Gospel values, Church teaching documents and in-services on related topics.

Ongoing formation includes opportunities for members to know one another and to discover one another's values, interests, skills and talents.

Formation efforts enable a diverse gathering of people to identify and integrate their gifts for the sake of the Council's mission.

The quality of group interaction and communication experienced in the Deanery Pastoral Council is reviewed and evaluated annually.

A periodic reflection on the Council itself as a community of faith, mutual concern and service is recommended.

Communal prayer and faith sharing are an integral part of Council life.

Characteristics of Members of the Deanery Pastoral Council.

A person, who as a practising Catholic, exhibits a willingness to come to a deeper knowledge of the wider Church.

A person willing to make a firm commitment to his/her baptismal responsibilities on the Deanery Council.

A person who has been or is currently a faithful and effective member of a Parish Pastoral Council.

A person who has exhibited leadership qualities.

Desired membership would reflect the diversity of the Deanery.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Responsibilities of Members.

- To prepare for every meeting by reading materials as agenda, minutes, etc.
- To attend meetings regularly and be on time.
- To listen carefully to others and to be open to ideas expressed.
- To participate in prayer and faith sharing.
- To focus on issues being discussed and to voice opinions.
- To allow each person to speak freely without interruption.
- To bring issues and concerns, ideas, etc. from parish to deanery.
- To report back to Parish Pastoral Council the content and issues discussed at the Deanery Pastoral Council.
- To be aware of the Holy Spirit working in the Council and in each member.

Council Spirituality.

Following the example of Our Lord Jesus, the members of the Deanery Pastoral Council will turn again and again to prayer, seeking guidance and direction from the Holy Spirit in all of their deliberations and actions. The shared faith of Council members, their mutual concern for the good of the Church and Christian charity, and the energizing effect of each other's apostolic zeal, combine to create a climate for spiritual Growth. A Deanery Pastoral Council which develops a sense of identity and mission will serve as a leaven of renewal and ongoing evangelisation for its own members as well as the faith communities within the Deanery.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Diocese of Lancaster

Deanery Pastoral Council Model Constitution

Article I. NAME

The name of this body shall be: The Deanery Pastoral Council of the _____
Deanery.

Article II. NATURE.

Section 1. The Deanery Pastoral Council shall be a representative body of the parishes within the confines of the Deanery. It shall be a liaison between the local parishes and the Diocese.

Section 2. The Council shall serve as a forum to facilitate better communications and to encourage greater co-operation among the parishes (priests, deacons and laity) of the Deanery and between these parishes and the Diocese.

Article III. PURPOSES

Section 1. To broaden horizons and to raise awareness of the parishes' membership in the larger church as well as their wider responsibility for the mission of the Church in the Diocese.

Section 2. To serve as a forum for dialogue, united effort and mutual help among the parishes of the Deanery and to serve as a consultative body to the Dean and Bishop.

Article IV. FUNCTIONS

Section 1. To identify and respond to the needs and concerns which are best handled at the Deanery level.

Section 2. To direct to the Bishop and his Council, the topics and issues that have a broader dimension that are beyond the scope of the Deanery.

Section 3. To discuss communications from the Bishop and provide feedback to him when solicited.

Section 4. To share information from the Bishop, the Deanery Clergy Conference and Deanery Pastoral Council with Parish Pastoral Councils.

Section 5. To develop consensus on Deanery programmes.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Section 6. To assist in setting Diocesan goals and priorities.

Article V. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Each Parish Pastoral Council shall select two of its members to the Council.

Section 2. All Priests/Priests in Charge of the Deanery shall be members of the Council.

Section 3. The Dean shall be an ex-officio member and President of the Council and shall have full voice in its deliberation.

Article VI. MEETINGS AND TERMS OF OFFICE.

Section 1. The Council meets four times a year usually within two weeks prior to the meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Section 2. The Parish Pastoral Council representative shall ordinarily serve a term of three years, renewable once.

Section 3. The terms of alternates shall be concurrent with their terms on the Parish Council, but not to exceed three years.

Section 4. At the spring meeting, the Chair shall conduct an election among parish council representatives to elect one of their members to serve on the Diocesan Pastoral Council. This representative will take office at the Autumn meeting.

Section 5. Deanery representatives must live within deanery boundaries.

Article VII. ELECTION AND TERMS OF OFFICERS.

Section 1. Any lay member representing their Parish Pastoral Council is eligible for office.

Section 2. The members of the Deanery Pastoral Council shall elect a Chair, vice Chair and a secretary. Treasurer is optional. These persons constitute the Executive Committee and work in collaboration with the Dean – the President.

Section 3. The election shall be at the Spring meeting.

Section 4. A nominating committee shall be established.

Section 5. Officers serve for one year terms and no more than two consecutive terms.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Article VIII. DUTIES OF OFFICERS.

Section 1. **The Dean** (*as President*) shall:

- Preside at the meetings of the Council
- Call special meetings of the Council

Section 2. **The Chair** shall:

- Conduct all meetings of the Council.
- Develop the agenda for all meetings, in consultation with the other members of a Steering Committee, especially the Dean.
- Ensure sure opportunities are provided for formation and education of council members.
- Preside at elections of new officers and Diocesan Pastoral Representatives.
- Appoint members to the committees.
- Create *ad hoc* committees.
- Perform all other duties usually associated with this office.

Section 3: **The Vice-Chair** shall:

- Assume role of Chair in Chair's absence
- Assist in overseeing Council activities.
- Succeed Chair if for any reason the Chair is unable to complete his/her term.
- Perform other duties as the Chair shall designate.

Section 4. **The Secretary** shall:

- Keep the records of the Council and attend to all the correspondence.
- Notify the members of the meetings
- Send members the agenda in advance of meetings..
- Keep minutes of the meetings and distribute them, within two weeks, to the members of the Council.

Article IX. COMMITTEES.

Section 1. The Steering Committee shall consist of the Dean (as President), the Chair, Vice Chair and the Secretary.

Section 2. A standing planning committee shall be established to lead the members in visioning-for future of the church in the deanery.

Section 3. *Ad Hoc* committees may be necessary to carry out specific responsibilities.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Article X. AGENDA .

Section 1. The Steering Committee shall draw up the agenda.

Section 2. The following shall have the right to suggest items for the agenda: The Bishop, the Dean, the Parish Pastoral Councils of the Deanery, members of the Deanery Pastoral Council, members of *Ad hoc* committees.

Article XI. AMENDMENTS.

The Constitution may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the total voting membership provided that such amendments have been presented to the members of the Council at the meeting prior to the meeting at which the vote is to be taken.

Appendix - Guidelines for Effective Meetings

It is essential to build into each meeting the components for effectiveness. Some of the key elements contributing to productive and effective meetings are:

- A clear statement of the purpose and objective of the meeting.
- An agenda with any necessary background information sent to Council members at least one week in advance of the Council meeting.
- Items on the agenda classified according to those needing decisions, those moving projects ahead or those simply providing information.
- Advance announcement made of the meeting to members of the Deanery. Visitors or observers ordinarily do not address the Council. They may communicate their concerns directly to a Council member, and such communication should be in writing. A Council may allocate a portion of time during the regular meeting to listen to visitors. However, these issues are then to be submitted in writing to the Executive committee and considered as possible material for the next Council meeting.
- Creation of an atmosphere of prayerful reflection and mutual trust procedures of the meeting designed to facilitate participation of all members and make the best use of the time.



+Patrick O'Donoghue, Bishop of Lancaster

Given at Lancaster on 12/May/2006

Constitution of Parish Pastoral Council

Parish Pastoral Councils in the Diocese of Lancaster

Bishop's Office
The Pastoral Centre
1 February 2006

Parish Pastoral Councils in the Diocese of Lancaster

In his Apostolic Exhortation *At the Beginning of the New Millennium*, Pope John Paul II stated that:

"the Church of the Third Millennium will need to encourage all the baptised and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church's life." The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity of Vatican II noted that as: "Participants in the function of Christ, priest, prophet and king, the laity have an active part of their own in the life and action of the Church... Nourished by their active participation in the liturgical community... they should develop the habit of working in the parish in close union with their priests, of bringing before the ecclesial community their own problems, world problems and questions regarding personal salvation, to examine them together".

Parish Pastoral Councils, like so many other structures, are only useful if they enable us to engage in the mission of the Church more fruitfully. Unless they give expression to the needs and mission of the local Church they are but 'talk-shops'. It is important that they reflect upon the Mystery of Christ and respond to His teaching in the light and spirit of the Beatitudes :

"Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed [are] they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed [are] the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed [are] they who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed [are] the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed [are] the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed [are] the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God". (Mt 5)

With the above in mind, I re-iterate yet once again, the need for all parishes in the Diocese to have a Parish Pastoral Council in place as soon as possible.

The role of a Parish Pastoral Council is set out in Canon 536 of the Code of Canon Law:

§1. If, after consulting the council of priests, the diocesan Bishop considers it opportune, a Pastoral council is to be established in each parish. In this council, which is presided over by the parish priest, Christ's faithful, together with those who by virtue of their office are engaged in Pastoral care in the parish; give their help in fostering Pastoral action.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

§2. The Pastoral council has only a consultative vote, and it is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan bishop.

Parish Pastoral Councils are not an end in themselves, but are at the service of mission and evangelization. Parish Pastoral Councils should enable priests and people to work together to build up a dynamic Christian community that is characterised by faith, mission, worship and service.

In particular they should facilitate the coordination of parish services regarding:

- proclaiming the Word of God and developing faith formation, especially for the young.
- fostering the sacramental, liturgical and prayer life of the parish.
- supporting marriage and family life.
- enabling the lay faithful to carry out their particular vocation of shaping society in accordance with the Gospel.
- strengthening commitment to social justice and caring for the poor and marginalised,

Parish Pastoral Councils should also:

- encourage leadership in reaching out to young people and engaging them in their journey of faith;
- look to welcoming new members into their communities and ensure that people of different nationalities and culture find their place in the liturgy and parish life;
- address the particular social challenges of the parish and ensure that the parish community is sensitive to the needs of all.

In order to carry out this mission, Parish Pastoral Councils should see their task in terms of:

- Prayerfully *discovering* the needs of the parish and involving everyone in a response.
- *Enabling* the baptised to discover their call as Disciples of Christ.
- *Providing* the necessary structures that will marry the needs of the parish with the many gifts and resources of the community.
- *Ensuring* that all voices within the parish, the diocese and the wider community are heard and respected.
- *Reviewing* the life and activities of the parish so that these are seen to foster the Mission of the Church.

The following Diocesan norms should form the basis for the introduction or development of Parish Pastoral Councils in the Diocese. I pray that Parish Pastoral Councils will be fruitful instruments of evangelization, mission and service in the years to come.

+PATRICK

Bishop of Lancaster, 1 February 2006

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Diocesan Norms for Parish Pastoral Councils

1. Establishment

A Parish Pastoral Council should be established and operative in each parish in the Diocese by the Fifth Sunday of Easter 2006. A review process will be initiated in two years time with a view to establishing definitive norms across the Diocese for such councils.

2. Guidelines

Aided by the general framework provided by this document, each Pastoral Council will fashion its own guidelines. (A structure for the parish guidelines is appended to this document). Whilst taking into account the special needs of the individual parishes the guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils should remain faithful to the basic nature of Parish Pastoral Councils outlined in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the Code of Canon Law.

The Finances of the Parish are catered for by the Finance Committee which is obligatory by Canon Law. Such a committee may or may not however, fall under the general oversight of the Parish Pastoral Council.

3. Membership

Members shall be baptised Catholics who participate in the life and worship of the parish and are available to attend a minimum of half the meetings in the space of one year.

3.1. Selection of Members

Parishes must decide upon a method of selecting members that is appropriate to their own particular situation. Some of these options include:

- Elections by the parish community.
- Nomination and discernment.
- Selection of representatives from parish organisations.
- Selection by the Parish Priest in consultation with assistant priests, deacons and/or with the present council members.

In some cases it may be decided to precede the selection of Members by the holding of a Parish Assembly to inform all parishioners of the nature of Parish Pastoral Councils and of the Process for selection.

3.2. Composition of the Parish Pastoral Council

The guidelines for the Parish Pastoral Council shall state the number of:

- *Ex officio* members, which should include all those who by virtue of their office are engaged in Pastoral ministry in the parish (Parish Priests, Assistant Priests, Deacons, Parish Sisters), representatives of each separate Eucharistic community (ie Chapel of Ease) where these exists, a representative of the parish finance committee;
- members selected by the parish in general;
- parishioners who are appointed because of their expertise in particular fields;

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

- *Ex officio* members should not exceed 40% of the total membership.

3.3. Representation

A broad representation of the whole parish is the ideal; what is essential is that the members of the council undertake to be representative of the whole community and focus on what is best for the whole parish not individual parish groups.

3.4. On-going formation

Prayer, reflection and skills training are of paramount importance. To ensure that the Council is effective on-going formation should be provided for every member of the Parish Pastoral Council.

3.5. Period for Membership

Elected and appointed members of the Parish Pastoral Council are to have terms of office. The term should be no shorter than two years and no more than four years initially, with the possibility of reappointment for one or more terms, according to the needs of each parish. If this is the case then it needs to be stated how many times the person may be reappointed - the period of time in-between appointments also needs to be stated.

The parish might consider having staggered terms to maintain a minimum of stability and efficiency. On the appointment of a new Parish Priest, it is recommended that the composition and membership of the Council be reviewed within one year. It is suggested that the Parish Pastoral Councils should consist of between 10 to 15 members.

4. Officers

At least three officers should be mentioned in the parish guidelines: president, chairperson, and secretary.

4.1. President

The Parish Priest or Priest –in-Charge (even if not resident) has been entrusted with the care of the parish by the bishop; he convokes the meetings and is the president of the Council. In extra-ordinary situations the Parish Priest as President may after consultation with the Dean or Bishop, suspend or dissolve the Parish Pastoral Council with a view to its re-formation.

4.2. Chairperson

The chairperson is elected by the members of the Council for a determined period of time with an option for renewal. The role of the chairperson is to prepare the agenda with the president and the secretary and to facilitate the meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council. Parishes might wish to appoint a Vice Chairperson to assist the Chairperson.

4.3. Secretary

The secretary is responsible for keeping a record of the meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council and for circulating relevant material to the Council members. The secretary could be elected for a renewable term of office; alternatively parishes might decide to appoint a secretary who is not a member of the Council as the task may limit participation in a meeting.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

4.4. Responsibilities of all members

Responsibilities will differ according to the needs of the individual parishes but in general the members of the Council will be required to:

- attend regular meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council
- provide input to deliberations of the Council
- assist where possible with the implementation of Parish policies
- grow in knowledge and awareness of what is happening in the parish.
- take part in the training/induction of all new Council members and avail of ongoing formation.

5.1. Meetings

The guidelines of the Parish Pastoral Council should specify the frequency of the meetings. Some parishes may need to meet monthly while others may choose less frequent meetings. The minimum requirement for meeting is four times a year.

5.2. Process

The collaboration between the Parish Priest and the Parish Pastoral Council is integral to each stage of the parish decision-making process. In virtue of his office the Parish Priest presides over and ratifies all stages of the process leading up to and including final choices and implementations. This collegial process respects the authority of the Parish Priest and the integrity, expertise and deliberations of the members of the Council. Above all, the Gospel mandate of mutual love, listening and understanding, should prevail among all the members of the Council.

5.3. Agenda

The agenda for each meeting will be finalised by the secretary, chairperson and the president of the Council and should be circulated to Council members in advance of the meeting, together with any notes or other relevant material required. Minutes of the meeting will be circulated at an agreed time after the meeting has taken place. A period of time should be set on the agenda for prayer and reflection

5.4. Quorum

Parishes must determine the minimum number of members who must attend the meeting and state which members are to be included. In general the minimum number of members required is one over one half. A legitimate *quorum* must include the Parish Priest or Priest-in-Charge.

6. Committees

The Parish Pastoral Council exists to coordinate the various parish initiatives of evangelization and Pastoral action including the work of standing and *ad hoc* committees. *Included here are some suggested core committees:*

Liturgy – a committee responsible for overseeing arrangements for the provision of and training opportunities for readers, ministers of holy communion, choir, altar servers, sacristans, welcomers, bell ringers, collectors, etc., also provision for children's' liturgy and

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

other services in the absence of the Priest, Rosary groups, opportunities for prayer, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Pastoral Works – ensuring provision for: Sacramental programmes, taking Holy Communion to the sick and housebound, visiting the lonely and the bereaved, youth groups, making ecumenical contacts and carrying out other outreach work in the Community.

Administration - ensuring volunteers to prepare news-bulletin, listing Mass intentions, organising the piety stall and newspaper sales, Missalettes, etc., seeing to requirements for the Sanctuary and Sacristy, overseeing good practice for protection of children and vulnerable persons, updating notice boards, bookkeeping all Parish records, etc.

Property and Graveyard - to ensure secure keyholders, security, caretaking, cleaning, flower arranging, controlling heating, arranging electrical and other inspections, organising grounds' maintenance, repairs and servicing of equipment, etc., liaising with Undertakers, Monumental Masons and others if a parish has its own graveyard available for burials.

Social Events and Fund Raising - a committee responsible for organising 'after Mass' coffee mornings, social evenings, other Parish get-togethers, parish fairs and raffles, bingo, youth and pre-school activities.

6.1. Ad Hoc Committees

Ad Hoc committees may be set up for specific purposes and with a definite time limit, eg planning a centenary celebration for the parish, ordinations etc.

7. Diocesan Support

In order to further facilitate parishes, the Diocese is committed to managing resources, training and on-going formation at deanery level under the guidance of each Vicar Forane (Dean) and Deanery Pastoral Council.

Opportunities for Adult Education, Formation, and Training

LANCASTER DIOCESAN CATECHISTS NETWORK

Lancaster Diocese operates a *Catechists Network* in order to keep Parish Catechists up to date with opportunities for formation and training in the Diocese. This is for those involved in any way in handing on the faith in a parish setting; catechesis, sacramental preparation, liturgical ministries, Liturgy of the Word with children, RCIA, etc.

Aims:

- To enable and encourage personal formation as a Catechist.
- To enable and encourage a deepening of knowledge and use of human and material resources.

Format:

- Autumn and Spring Formation and Training Day in the North and the South of the Diocese to enable easier access for participants.
- A spiritual retreat day in June for all to attend.

To join the network and receive information contact Christine – Catechist Network Co-ordinator, or Hilary at The Education Centre, Balmoral Road, Lancaster, LA1 3BT. Tel: 01524 841190, email secretary@lancasterrcdioocese.org.uk.

LANCASTER DIOCESE CATHOLIC CERTIFICATE IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES (CCRS)

The course enables participants to acquire the basic knowledge needed so that they can confidently contribute actively to Catholic education, for example as Catechists or Teachers.

The course content is validated by the Board of Religious Studies of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

The course is modular in structure, with six core and two specialist modules. Modules are individually certificated, allowing participants the possibility of starting the course in one Diocese or college and completing it in another.

Lancaster is developing the delivery of CCRS modules through e-Learning allowing participants greater flexibility of personal study time and application. Available October 2008.

For more information contact David Evans, Registration Officer, at The Education Centre, Balmoral Road, Lancaster, LA1 3BT. Tel: 01524 841190, email david.evans@lancasterrcdioocese.org.uk.

Lancaster Diocese in collaboration with Maryvale Institute

a. Echoes

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

This is a course for 'all those who wish to share their Catholic faith with others'. Overall it aims to give participants confidence in their teaching through knowing and understanding better **what** the Church wants us to teach and **how** the Church wants us to teach.

The course lasts for eleven weeks of approximately 1½ hr sessions and is available to people in the area where they live.

Successful participants will be presented with a certificate on behalf of the Lancaster Diocese and Maryvale Institute.

b. Certificate in Catechesis

The course is for anyone interested in developing his or her own faith for the sake of explaining it to others. The course aims to provide a solid foundation in the key areas of the Catholic Faith, which a person needs to understand in order to be able to pass on the faith. Those who successfully complete the course are eligible for the "Certificate in Catechesis" offered by Maryvale Institute and approved by the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome.

The course is a two-year, part-time, distance-learning course by which people study at home, in their own time, following specially written course books for each module of the course. There are three study days to attend during the year at which the student is introduced to the modules and an annual retreat day.

c. Certificate and Diploma in Evangelisation and Ministry

This course serves parish group leaders and those in parish ministry: Teachers, Catechists, and Parents; Community Leaders and Members; Youth Workers, and those involved with Family Ministry and Ministering to the Sick.

The first module, Foundations for Evangelisation and Ministry, forms the heart of the course. After this compulsory module, each student chooses one of the following four pathways:

- Family evangelisation and ministry,
- Youth evangelisation and ministry,
- Parish evangelisation and ministry,
- Evangelisation and ministry for the sick.

For more information contact – Christine – Catechist Network Co-ordinator, or Hilary at The Education Centre, Balmoral Road, Lancaster, LA1 3BT. Tel: 01524 841190, email: secretary@lancasterrcdioocese.org.uk.

Our Lady's Catechists

Our Lady's Catechists (OLC) is a special committee of the *Catholic Women's League* which provides correspondence courses in the Catholic faith.

There are two main categories:

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

- The training of catechists through the *Diploma Course* which gives academic and practical training at a more advanced level or through the *Foundation Course* for those who wish to qualify as parish catechists or adults seeking to develop their knowledge and understanding of Church teachings.
- The education of children and adults through *Catholicism Made Simple*, an introduction to religious study for adults, and *Children's Section*, for children unable to attend Catholic schools.

For more information contact Margaret Jones, 26 Orchard Avenue, Cannock, Staffs, WS11 1JD, www.ourladyscatechists.org.

St Bede's Institute, Ushaw College

St Bede's Institute offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Theology and Ministry, validated by Durham University, on a full-time or part-time basis. It also offers a range of modules delivered on-line.

For more information contact the Course Administrator, Ushaw College, Durham, DH7 9RH, tel: 0191 373 8517, email ann.scott@ushaw.ac.uk or www.ushaw.ac.uk.

The Catholic Voice

See the back page of *The Catholic Voice* for various opportunities throughout the Diocese for all aspects of adult education, formation and training.

**Diocese of Lancaster
Parish Finance Committee Norms**

Dear Friends

To ensure that the Church is fully resourced and equipped for mission, the Code of Canon Law requires each parish to organise a finance committee. In Canon 537, the Code offers the following instructions:

Each Parish is to have a Finance Council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the Diocesan Bishop; in this Council, the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the Priest in the administration of Parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532.

In keeping with the directives of the Code of Canon Law, the Diocese of Lancaster presents the following guidelines for the organisation and operation of a Parish Finance Committee.

General Functions:

- 1 As a standing council of the Parish, the Finance Committee shall offer its technical skills in financial matters to the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge and whoever he should designate.
- 2 The Finance Committee is to assist and advise the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge with respect of the supervision of all material goods belonging to the Parish.
- 3 The Finance Committee is to assist and advise the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge concerning the administration of parish goods within the limits of the Code of Canon Law and applicable civil law.

Membership:

- 1 The membership of the committee is to be composed of no less than three (3) members of the Christian Faithful. The members should be truly skilled in financial affairs as well as in civil laws and possess outstanding integrity. The Parish Priest/Priest in Charge shall appoint all members of the Finance Committee.
- 2 The Parish Pastoral Council may recommend candidates to the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge for his appointment as members of the Finance Committee.
- 3 Members of the Parish Finance Committee (excluding ex-officio) are to be appointed for three (3) years terms with at least one member's term expiring each year. Thus, initially, one member would require a one (1) year appointment; one member would require a two (2) year appointment; one member would require a three (3) year appointment.

Following these initial appointments, succeeding members would be appointed to three (3) year terms. Members may be appointed to other three year terms.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

A Specific Duties

- 1 The Committee shall meet no less than four (4) times a year or more frequently if required.
- 2 The Committee shall assist the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge, as the administrator of the parish goods, in the preparation each year, of a budget of the income and expenditures foreseen for the operations of the entire parish in the coming year. This yearly budget of income and expenditures will be reviewed by the Parish Pastoral Council, then reviewed by the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge prior to the beginning of each financial year.
- 3 The Committee shall review the various Parish Income and Expense reports for the total parish no less than twice a year.
- 4 The Committee shall assist the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge in the preparation of an annual financial report of income/expenditure covering all parish operations for dissemination to the parish at large.
- 5 The Committee shall assist the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge in assuring that the following financial functions are performed:
 - Timely payment of debt.
 - Timely payment of vendor invoices.
 - Timely interest payments.
 - Investment of surplus funds.
 - Assure adequate revenue through various means such as parish fundraising and planned giving programmes.
- 6 The Committee shall assist the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge in the co-ordination of the financial activities with other parish organisations such as The Parish Pastoral council.
- 7 The Committee shall review the long range planning objectives of the Parish as they are related to the ability of the Parish to fund those goals and maintain financial integrity.

Additional Considerations:

The Parish Pastoral Council annually (usually in November) begins to plan priorities, goals and objectives for the coming financial year (in accordance with their long term plan). At this time they review and evaluate implementation prior to establishing new priorities.

The Finance Committee meets regularly to review the income and expenditures year to date. If income is inadequate they recommend to the Parish Pastoral Council, through the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge, several options for cutting expenditures or increasing revenue. The Finance Committee might also examine various procedures for boosting parish income.

As ever in Christ Our Lord

+Patrick O'Donoghue

Bishop of Lancaster

Bishop's Office, February 2006

Parish Property Management

A guide for the use of voluntary workers appointed by their Priest to assist in the upkeep of Parish Property

This guide provides general information for the use of voluntary workers engaged in parish property management. It is not a complete statement of the Trustees' responsibilities under Charity and other legislation. More specific advice about particular problems may be sought from the Diocese by contacting:-

The Property Office
The Pastoral Centre
Balmoral Road
Lancaster
LA1 3BT

Tel 01524 596060

Email property@lancasterdiocese.org.uk

This booklet and other connected information, forms, etc, (see item 19) is available on the Diocesan web site: www.lancasterdiocese.org.uk

June 2006

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Letter from the Bishop to all those people who give their time and their expertise to look after our parish property.

Dear friends in Christ,

Voluntary workers are the life blood of our parishes. They carry out many and varied tasks according to their skills and the time that they make available for the benefit of the Church. The present financial difficulties of the Diocese and the reducing number of Priests in active ministry, mean that more help than ever is now needed at parish level to ensure that our property is well maintained and that health and safety and other legislation is followed for the protection of all parish workers and those attending services in our Churches.

It is very important that we do everything practicable for the welfare and safety of all of our workers. We must together do whatever is necessary to reduce hazards and improve safety in every parish and I commend to you all the advice in this booklet and the Health and Safety statement and the parish safety check list which we have produced to help in this process. Someone should be available in each parish to assist with the training of parish workers as appropriate for the work that they do.

The Trustees of the Diocese attach the greatest importance to the health, safety and welfare of all their employed and voluntary workers and will make every effort to provide safe and healthy working conditions and do everything reasonably practicable to prevent injury and ill-health resulting from their work in parishes.

I am taking this opportunity to thank everyone involved in any way in the support of our parishes without which it would be impossible to provide for the spiritual wellbeing of our communities.

With sincerest good wishes, prayers and thanks,

Yours in Christ,

+ Patrick O'Donoghue
Bishop of Lancaster

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Introduction

In pursuance of the decision of the Trustees to delegate responsibility for the upkeep of property to the parishes, the Trustees have produced this guidance on how people might work together as a 'parish management team' (PMT). This team is to be the means by which the Priest ensures that the corporate responsibilities of the parish, relating to property, are exercised in accordance with civil law. In practical terms, a PMT would mirror the work of the Trustees at parish level.

In particular a PMT would support the 'Occupier' (Priest, the Pastoral Council and the Finance committee established under Canon Law) and all other people who do paid or voluntary work for the parish, in dealing with parish property and other facilities to enable the Trustees to fulfil their legal obligations under the Diocesan Trust Deed and Charity law as regulated by the Charity Commission.

Members of the PMT may be encouraged to undertake other voluntary work as members of the parish community, parish Pastoral Council or other Pastoral group, to build up a dynamic Christian parish community characterised by faith, mission, worship and service. It is however essential to understand that when they work as a PMT their responsibility is to enable the parish to comply with civil law.

All references to the 'Priest' means the Parish Priest or the Priest-in-charge. It is for the Priest to decide on the amount of work to be delegated to the PMT.

This guide contains general information on:-

1. Responsibilities of the Trustees.
2. Responsibilities of the Priest.
3. PMT membership and procedural arrangements.
4. Services which the Priest may ask the PMT to provide for the wellbeing of a Parish.
5. Health and safety matters.
6. Fire precautions and security.
7. Servicing, supplies and tradesmen.
8. Insurances.
9. Surveys and Inspections.
10. Repairs, renewals and alterations.
11. Selecting contractors and tradesmen.
12. Tenders.
13. Value added tax (VAT).
14. Control of projects and payment of invoices.
15. Approvals.
16. Outside Assistance.
17. Larger or complex projects.
18. More information.
19. Other relevant documents available from the Property Office.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

1. Responsibilities of the Trustees

All Parish property and other assets are vested in the Lancaster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees Registered 'the Trustees', a charity duly registered with the Charity Commission under number 234331. The Charity is subject to Civil Law, in particular, but not exclusively, to the Charities Acts of 1992 & 1993 and subsequent amendments or re-enactments thereto.

In Civil Law the Priest is the duly appointed agent of the Trustees and is responsible for all of the temporal goods and other parish facilities, the property and assets.

All money and other assets appertaining to the Parish are beneficially owned by the Trustees and may be used only in pursuance of the charitable aims and objective set out in the Diocesan Trust Deed.

2. Responsibilities of the Priest

Under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 the Occupier (the Priest) owes to all lawful visitors the 'common duty of care' to see that visitors will be reasonably safe in using the premises to which they are invited or are permitted to be there.

UK safety legislation, regulations and Codes of Practice relating to the workplace, places on the employer (the Priest) the duty to identify all potential hazards to health and safety, evaluate them, eliminate them wherever possible and devise work practices that minimise those hazards that cannot be eliminated. All of this is to ensure that employees and voluntary workers are not exposed to any unnecessary risk of injury to themselves, or damage to their property, in undertaking work on or in Church premises.

3. PMT membership and procedural arrangements

The PMT is the team selected and appointed by the Priest to coordinate the parish workforce which collectively undertakes all necessary work to ensure that the parish facilities are properly maintained in a safe, good and efficient manner for the use of the whole of the parish community.

The Priest should invite suitable people to join the PMT with consideration being given to retired or semi-retired professionals, executives of commercial firms or local government, building trade workers and others with experience in the upkeep and management of property. Others with administrative and secretarial experience should also be recruited to assist. One member of the team may be appointed as the Parish safety representative to assist with the training of parish workers and to take over the responsibility of the Priest for health and safety requirements. The Priest may be the team leader or may appoint a team leader and an assistant team leader.

The team leader shall be responsible for arranging meetings of the members of the PMT, as and when the Priest or other members of the team decide that important matters need to be considered and recommendations need to be made.

It may be agreed that urgent matters should be decided by the team leader, subject to taking reasonable steps to consult with other members and the Priest. Such recommendations to be reported to the next meeting of the PMT.

In performing their duties, no property may be bought, sold or substantially altered, or expenditure over £5,000 incurred, without the written permission of the Trustees, such permission to be sought via the Priest.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

4. Services which a PMT may provide for the wellbeing of a parish, if requested to do so by the Priest

Advising on legal, Diocesan and Insurers' requirements relating to health and safety, security, facilities for disabled, etc.

Contracting for the supply of goods or services when accepted by the Finance committee, agreed by the Parish Council, and approved by the Priest, also approved by the Trustees if the cost is over £5,000.

Liaising with and supporting the work of groups and individuals engaged in Parish activities by providing necessary office and working space, other facilities and equipment, a safe working environment and incurring expenditure only by agreement with the Finance Committee in accordance with Diocesan Regulations (see Diocesan Handbook).

Arranging for keys, keyholders, security, caretaking, cleaning, controlling heating, arranging electrical and other inspections, organising grounds' maintenance, repairs and servicing of equipment, etc.

Undertaking health and safety checks at least annually and making arrangements to carry out work needing to be done to remedy any hazard which may affect the health or safety of the occupants or visitors.

Specifying requirements for small building works, obtaining tenders, overseeing work done and agreeing payments.

Liaising with Undertakers, Monumental Masons and others involved in work in any parish graveyard.

5. Health and safety matters

Scaffolding, ladders and steps should be checked on a routine basis by a competent person. Damaged or broken ladders and step ladders should be renewed. Ladders should not be used to gain access to levels over 2 metres in height, unless used by an experienced tradesman. Scaffolding should be used when appropriate to provide a safe working platform at greater heights and only if relevant training has been given and evidence is held by the Priest. Secure storage for ladders, scaffolding and other access equipment must be arranged, which should not be in places causing obstructions to access or egress to the premises.

A second person should always be present when work is being carried out to premises or equipment, particularly when using electrical or mechanical tools. Appropriate protective clothing, footwear and protection for sight and hearing must be provided for the use of all workers whether paid or unpaid.

Instructions should always be given by suitably qualified persons before allowing voluntary workers to use tools or other equipment with which they may not be familiar.

All obsolete or redundant equipment, portable gas containers, etc., should be removed to a secure store, or otherwise disposed of in accordance with Local Authority Regulations.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

A first aid kit should be provided in a visible location and should be regularly checked and restocked. A log recording all accidents should be kept on the premises.

A 'parish safety check list' should be completed annually and any work identified as necessary to meet health and safety standards carried out without delay.

6. Fire precautions and security

Fire certificates are not generally needed for Parish property but advice free of charge, is generally available from the local Fire Officer. Means of escape should be clearly identified, be well lit and kept clear of items of furniture and equipment which could impede an urgent evacuation of the premises. Emergency lighting should be provided in these areas and outside of emergency exit doors.

All exit doors must be capable of being opened from the inside without the use of a key, during use by the public. Fire extinguishers should be positioned in escape routes or near to exits and must be overhauled once each year. The local fire service will be willing to provide training in fire fighting.

Prevention of access by unauthorised persons must be considered, whilst accepting the desirability of making it possible for the Church to be accessible for the Parish community at reasonable times each day or week.

CCTV with warning notices may help to deter unauthorised persons, but these may not be sufficient when the Priest or other officials are not on the premises. Digital locks may be considered for daytime access by members of the parish community, but five-lever dead locks should be used when total security is needed. Lists of authorised key holders should be maintained

Security lighting should be provided to external areas to deter unauthorised entry and flood lighting may be required over presbytery doors, controlled by PIR detectors during hours of darkness.

7. Servicing, supplies and tradesmen

Operating instructions, guarantees, etc., for all appliances and equipment should be kept available for reference by the users, with names addresses and telephone numbers for the supply of parts and consumables and for servicing.

A similar list of all tradesmen available in the locality should be compiled for effecting specialist repairs to property, servicing of equipment, clearing high level gutters and similar tasks, which should not be carried out by unskilled voluntary workers.

8. Insurances

Legal liabilities are insured under a comprehensive package, underwritten by the Royal and Sun Alliance insurance company. These include Public and Product liability and Employer liability. It also covers the liability of the Trustees, Clergy, Housekeepers, Managers, Employees, Youth workers and Voluntary workers against claims arising from their work for the Diocese and Parishes. All voluntary workers providing 'professional services' for the Diocese are insured to cover the risk of legal action against them personally, alleging breach of professional duty. i.e. allegations of 'professional negligence'.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Financial loss to a third party arising from Parish activities organised or undertaken by voluntary workers is covered by the Diocese under its legal liability insurance policy. All legal defence costs against claims against Diocese and Parish officials including voluntary workers arising from a prosecution under Health and Safety and Consumer Protection Acts are insured by the Diocese.

Parish property except for licensed clubs is insured by the Diocese with the Catholic National Mutual Limited, an insurance company wholly owned by participating Dioceses.

All loss and damage to property which may give rise to a claim under the Diocese's insurance policy should be notified to the Finance Office. Advice may be sought from the Catholic Church Insurance Association, 2, Prebendal Court, Oxford Road, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP19 8EY. Tel: 01296 422030. Emergency out of hours Tel. 01494 812029 or 01296 429968.

Any claim, or indication of a possible claim, against the Diocese, Parish or any individual worker should be notified or forwarded unanswered to the Catholic Church Insurance Association at the above address.

9. Surveys and Inspections.

Every Parish should have in its archives a copy of a 'condition' survey of all of its properties prepared by a qualified Architect or Surveyor. These need to be updated every five years. A standard form is available for this and a fee for inspecting all Parish property and reporting defects should be agreed before engaging professional services for this.

More detailed surveys of the structure, heating and electrical installation, timber infestation etc., may be recommended and these may be agreed subject to the agreement of a fee before proceeding to make the appointment.

Every building to which the public are admitted must be subject to an initial survey to locate and assess asbestos containing materials (ACMs) incorporated in its fabric, equipment and furnishings. A more detailed 'type 2' survey must be undertaken to sample ACMs and to identify the type of any asbestos and the risks which may exist. No work which may disturb asbestos may commence without a 'type 3' survey with full sampling and identification, and all contractors or individual tradesmen being notified of the need to take precautions in compliance with asbestos regulations and being provided with a 'permit to work'. Written records of surveys are required to be retained by the Priest and made available as necessary.

All electrical installations and appliances, both fixed and portable, must be regularly tested and any defects remedied without delay. Certificates certifying that tests have been carried out are required by the Diocesan insurers and copies should be retained in the Parish archives.

All boiler plant and gas installations and appliances should be regularly inspected, tested and serviced by a suitable qualified engineer (e.g. CORGI registered for gas appliances).

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Certificates certifying that tests have been carried should be retained in the Parish archives. A maintenance and inspection service agreement is desirable.

10. Repairs, renewals and alterations

Work to parish property identified in the quinquennial survey, or seen to be needed at any time, requires the preparation of a complete list and description of all items to be repaired or renewed.

Repairs and renewals which can be undertaken by the parish using local contractors may proceed without Trustees' approval, but any such work costing over £4,000 and all alterations must be agreed by the Trustees in principle before any approach is made to consultants or contractors.

11. Selecting contractors and tradesmen

A minimum of three firms or tradesmen should be asked to tender for work to parish property, unless it is for minor items, which a local tradesman may be asked to do on the basis of time spent and materials used, providing that a fully detailed invoice is submitted before payment is made.

All firms and tradesmen to be invited to tender for work should have a proven record of carrying out work to a satisfactory standard. Each should provide details of technical expertise and experience and a list of similar work recently undertaken. Membership of relevant trade organisations are important particularly for work to gas and electrical installations.

12. Tenders

The full list and description of the work should be provided to each firm asked to tender, with as much information as possible about the quality of materials to be used. A fully detailed professional specification is not required, but tenderers should be asked to provide full details of the work which they propose to carry out for the amount tendered.

All tenders must be fixed prices for the work open for acceptance for a minimum of six weeks. Tenders should indicate whether Value added tax (VAT) is payable in addition to the amount tendered. Payment terms should allow 28 days for payment.

13. Value added tax (VAT)

VAT is not payable on the approved cost of providing facilities for the disabled.

VAT may be recovered on the cost of repairs to the structure of 'listed' places of worship (Churches) if carried out by VAT registered firms or individuals. (Property office will advise)

14. Control of projects and payment of invoices

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

A suitably experienced member of the PMT, or someone co-opted to it for this purpose, should be asked to deal with the contractor/tradesmen and advise on the standard of work executed.

All of the work must be completed to a satisfactory standard before authorising payment, although interim payments, appropriate for work done, may be agreed if the work is prolonged for good reason.

No payment may be made before work has been carried out and all payments must be made by cheque drawn on the parish bank account. Cash payments should be avoided.

15. Approvals

Projects costing £5,000 or less may be carried out with the agreement of the Priest. The approval of the Trustees is required if the cost may be more than £5,000. A moratorium presently applies to all work costing over £5,000 unless needed to keep property wind and weather-tight, to alleviate health and safety problems or to comply with Government legislation.

Trustees approval is also required for any work which will interfere with the structure of any building or change its external appearance. All such work may require Building Regulation approval and Planning permission.

All work to 'listed' Churches except for like-for-like repairs and renewals requires the approval of the local Historic Churches Committee and work to other 'listed' Buildings, eg 'listed' presbyteries, requires approval from the Local Authority.

16. Outside Assistance

Any tasks which may be beyond the competence of people in the PMT, or able to be co-opted for work to parish property, should be referred to the Dean who should be able to find voluntary workers from other parishes willing to help.

The Diocesan Property Office will give advice about the availability of experts who have volunteered to give guidance on property surveys, inspections and testing of gas and electrical installations, presence of asbestos containing materials, (ACMs), etc.

17. Larger or complex projects

An architect, surveyor or engineer will be needed to undertake larger or more complex projects. The Diocesan Property office should be contacted before any approach is made to professional consultants, which will require a formal appointment and the agreement of fee charges.

18. More information

Further guidance may be obtained by referring to the Diocesan Handbook first issued to all parishes in June 1996 and from subsequent additions relating to more recent legislation. A copy should be available in the parish. Section H22 (Health, Safety and Statutory Regulations) and Section H23 (Fire and Security) are particularly relevant.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

19. Other relevant documents for parish use obtainable from the Property office, or from the Diocesan web site: (www.lancasterdiocese.org.uk).

- Draft of a parish Health and Safety Statement (to be completed and prominently displayed).
- Parish safety check list (to be completed annually).
- The 'Management of asbestos in buildings' and a form 'Permit to work'
- Application form for Trustees' approval to carry out work to parish property costing over £5,000.

A Property Moratorium was put in place in November 2005 due to the financial crisis within the Diocese at that time. The moratorium continued during the Fit for Mission Review as it would be unwise to allow substantial funds to be expended on a church if there was a possibility of it being closed in the short term. However, the Trustees agreed that the Moratorium is lifted on 1st April 2009. As a result:

Approval of Property Proposals

Property projects of £5,000 or above will continue to require recommendation from the Property and Finance Committees and approval of the Trustee body but Property projects up to £20,000 (including decoration, lighting and energy saving projects) will be given priority by the Trustees. Property projects of £20,000 or more will be categorised as follows:

First Category – Unavoidable works (cannot be deferred without breaching statutory obligations)

- a) Make a building wind and weather-tight.
- b) Fulfil health and safety requirements.

Second Category – Necessary works (risk of seriously affecting operations or damage to property):

- a) Heating replacement.
- b) Re-wiring.
- c) Avoid wasting money on temporary repairs.

Third Category – Development projects:

- a) Parish Halls.
- b) Improvement or enlargement of existing facilities.
- c) Church re-orderings. The written support of a member of the Diocesan Liturgy Formation Team will be required (see Diocesan Directory) with a copy of any report forwarded direct to the Bishop.

All submissions to the Property Committee are to be signed off by the Parish Priest and accompanied where appropriate by three quotations and all other relevant information.

Financing of Property Projects

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

The Trustees will limit the use of existing parish funds, expended on new projects across the Diocese as a whole to £500,000 in any one year.

First category works can be funded from available Parish funds and/or interest free loan.

Second category works should be funded as to 50% from “new monies” raised within the parish by way of appeal, donations or bequests or from property sales.

Third category works will be required to be funded as to 75% from “new monies”.

No application should be made to any grant funding body (for financial assistance over £5,000) or to any local authority (for planning consent) without the prior approval of the Trustees. For listed buildings, the Historic Churches Committee will only consider applications following approval by the Diocesan Trustees.

Sample Job Description

COMMISSIONED EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION

Parish of:

Responsible to: Parish Priest

Function:

- A To take Holy Communion to the sick and housebound, in private homes, nursing homes or hospital.
- B To distribute Holy Communion from the Chalice or the Ciborium at Mass, as required.

Main Responsibilities:

1. To undergo initial training (usually four sessions).
2. To attend a Day of Recollection once a year and to be re-commissioned on an annual basis.
3. To be prepared to be part of a rota and to undertake to find a replacement minister when the requirements of the rota cannot be fulfilled.
4. In line with National Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy, all ministers are required to complete a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check at enhanced level for vulnerable adults.

Person Specification: The extraordinary minister will -

- be a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church.
- be a person of faith and prayer, with a particular love of the Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and be aware of the call to service and ministry in the Church.
- have good communication skills and be sensitive, reliable and discreet.

Support Provided:

- Initial Training.
- Annual Day of Recollection.
- Books for bringing Holy Communion to the sick.
- Specialist training for hospital ministry.
- Occasional formation days in the Parish/Deanery.

Date agreed:

Liturgical Issues

Introduction

At this time of heart-wrenching change in the life of your parish people will need to find a place to express their grief. The Liturgy is a natural moment in which this can occur. It is hoped that what is contained in this portion of the manual will help to facilitate a celebration that will help the people to express that grief. But, at the same time, the Liturgy needs to promote a sense of healing and sense of movement as the people journey to a “new” home. Hence, the suggestions and guidelines in this manual are intended to promote and foster the people’s participation in this difficult moment. It will be important to prepare for this last celebration in a way that both express the people’s grief while allowing for a sense of solace.

Therefore, as you organize the closing ritual celebrations in your church building consider the following:

- A planning group should be convened in the parish to determine what will happen liturgically. The change affects everybody: including the church to which the parishioners will come to belong. All the members of the parishes are challenged - not just the ones who might participate in special events, or who attend a certain Mass on Sunday.
- The time and place for the final celebration is Sunday Mass: Special events (evening prayer, novena, a weekday evening Mass) can certainly be part of the process of closing. Yet it is primarily the Sunday Mass into which the Catholic community is called to gather as a whole and thus it is there that these observances should take place.
- The change is a transition, a "journey:" There is a "from where," "to where," and "through what" dimension of this change. These liturgies will not accomplish that journey, but will symbolize and nurture it.
- Thanksgiving, hope-in-trial and solidarity are themes that should mark this journey.
- The community of people and their personal, spiritual journey are more important than a building and things. Rather, reference to things should help people gather their memories and make their transition.
- Regarding the things of worship, emphasis is on central images: the Word of God, the Altar around which Christ gathers his church, the baptismal call and dignity of Catholic people, and the images of being gathered in prayer and then sent in mission.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Liturgy on the Occasion of a church building ceasing for Worship

Preparation for the Closing Liturgy

When preparing the closing liturgy, the readings and prayers of the particular Sunday on which the parish is slated to celebrate its final liturgy may not adequately address his particular moment in the life of the parish. Therefore, the Bishop, in accord with article no. 374 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, is granting his permission for the use of the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions. Out of these Masses, two in particular have been chosen for the celebration of this moment. They are called *Option A*, which is the Mass for the Local Church, and, *Option B*, which is the second Mass of Thanksgiving.

Option A is chosen because its prayers and readings remind us that the Church is something larger than one particular church building or parish. Rather, the Church is the people who have been created by the Spirit in baptism and formed through the gospel and Eucharist. As important as the parish is to the lives of the people connected to it, we must always recognize that we are part of a community that transcends building walls or parish boundaries. These prayers and readings help to point to the greater reality to which we belong as a member of the Catholic Church. There is, of course, grief attached with the passing of a church. But, there is also the possibility of hope for through the new parish family to which one will belong there will be new opportunities to recognize how the life of the Church can be expressed and experienced.

Option B is chosen because its prayers and readings remind us in midst of this change to give the thanksgiving that is due to God for all that the church building has meant through the years of its existence. The liturgy can help the assembly to focus on all that God has done for the members of the community through the entire life of the parish. As such, as this church building comes to an end the good that has been accomplished through it by God does not end. It continues through the lives of the people and it is those good works of the Lord that they will bring with them to their new parish family. It is thus both a time of grief for what is lost but also a time of remembering and a time to give thanksgiving for what will always remain with us.

These are simply suggestions and the final choices must be made based on the best Pastoral needs of the people. It is important to note, though, that this Mass will have a special significance for the people, as such, adding a greater sense of solemnity to the celebration is not out of place. As the parish prepares for this celebration please keep in mind the following:

1. More diligent preparation may be necessary for parts of this celebration.
2. Having some form of practice before the celebration may be helpful particularly if there is to be different processions as part of this celebration.
3. It will be important to prearrange some of the details with the new parish if they will be involved.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

4. Choose which Mass will be celebrated either *Option A*, *Option B* or the proper Mass of the day.
5. Choose from the options provided below and adapt as needed.
6. As the closing liturgy in the Church, it would be important to consider making the Mass a more solemn occasion. As part of that the use of a full procession, thurifer, cross, candle bearers etc might be something to consider.
7. The use of incense in this celebration could lend greater solemnity to this celebration.
8. The choice of appropriate music will be essential to this celebration. Choosing music that the parish is already familiar with is of the utmost importance at this time.
9. Having a leaflet for the people could be very helpful as well as possibly a prayer card of the patron saint of the parish.

Before Mass

Symbols of parish/church life may be displayed in the gathering space, sanctuary or other visible space. The symbols may include: Parish Register, Registers of Sacraments of Initiation and Marriage, Book of the Dead, History of the Parish, etc. It is important to note though that the sacramental registers should not be displayed in such a way that people may have direct access to them. These are private records that are not intended for public inspection. These symbols may be brought forward in the entrance procession or simply placed in the sanctuary before hand and sent forth with the people at the final blessing. It would be inappropriate for these symbols to be presented with the gifts of bread and wine during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Penitential Rite

Celebrant: Lord Jesus, you have been our companion and guide on our journey.

Lord have mercy.

People: Lord have mercy.

Celebrant: Lord Jesus, you stand by us in hard times.

Christ have mercy.

People: Christ have mercy.

Celebrant: Lord Jesus, you lead us in hope to resurrection and new life.

Lord have mercy.

People: Lord have mercy.

Celebrant: May Almighty God have mercy on us,

forgive us our sins,

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen

SUGGESTED READINGS AND PRAYER FOR OPTION A

Opening Prayer:

God our Father,
in all the churches scattered throughout the world you show
forth the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
Through the gospel and the Eucharist
bring your people together in the Holy Spirit
and guide us in your love.

Prayer over the Gifts:

Make us a sign of your love for all people,
and help us to show forth
the living presence of Christ in the world,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one
God, for ever and ever.

Prayer after Communion:

Lord,
we celebrate the memorial of the love of your Son.
May his saving work bring salvation to all the world
through the ministry of your Church.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

Or/

Father,
you sustain us with the word and body of your Son.
Watch over us with loving care;
help this Church to grow in faith,
holiness, charity, and loving service.
Grant this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

Reading from the Old Testament

Isaiah 56: 1, 6-7

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Thus says the Lord:

Observe what is right, do what is just;

for my salvation is about to come,

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

my justice, about to be revealed.
The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
ministering to him,
Loving the name of the Lord,
and becoming his servants—
All who keep the Sabbath free from profanation
and hold to my covenant,
Them I will bring to my holy mountain
and make joyful in my house of prayer;
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices
will be acceptable on my altar,
For my house shall be called
a house of prayer for all peoples.
The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 24:4-5ab, 6-7, 8-9, 10, 14

R Remember your mercies, O Lord

Your ways, O Lord, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Saviour.

R Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Remember that your compassion, O Lord,
and your kindness are from of old.
The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not;
in your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O Lord

R Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Good and upright is the Lord;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice
he teaches the humble his way.

R Remember your mercies, O Lord.

All the paths of the Lord are kindness and constancy
toward those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

R Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

The friendship of the Lord is with those who fear him,
and his covenant, for their instruction.

R Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Reading From the New Testament

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

Ephesians 2:19-22

The whole structure grows into a temple, sacred to the Lord.

Brothers and sisters:

You are no longer strangers and sojourners,
but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones
and members of the household of God,
built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets,
with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.
Through him the whole structure is held together and
grows into a temple sacred in the Lord;
in him you also are being built together
into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.
The word of the Lord.

OR

A reading from the Book of Revelation

Revelation 21:1-5a

Behold, God's dwelling with the human race

I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth.
The former heaven and the former earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.
I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race.
He will dwell with them and they will be his people
and God himself will always be with them as their God.
He will wipe every tear from their eyes,
and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain,
for the old order has passed away."
The One who sat on the throne said,
"Behold, I make all things new."
This the word of the Lord.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

John 17:11b, 17-23 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world

Jesus raised his eyes toward heaven and prayed, saying:

"Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me,
so that they may be one just as we are one.

Consecrate them in the truth.

Your word is truth.

As you sent me into the world,
so I sent them into the world.

And I consecrate myself for them,
so that they also may be consecrated in truth.

"I pray not only for them,
but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
so that they may all be one,
as you, Father, are in me and I in you,
that they also may be in us,
that the world may believe that you sent me.

And I have given them the glory you gave me,
so that they may be one, as we are one,

I in them and you in me,
that they may be brought to perfection as one,
that the world may know that you sent me,
and that you loved them even as you loved me."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

SUGGESTED READINGS AND PRAYERS FOR OPTION B

In Thanksgiving

Opening Prayer:

Let us pray:

God and Father of all gifts,
we praise you, the source of all we have and are.
Teach us to acknowledge always
the many good things your infinite love has given us.
Help us to love you with all our heart and all our strength.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Prayer over the Gifts:

Lord,
we offer you this sacrifice of praise
for all you have given us
even though we are unworthy of your love.
May we always use your many gifts
to bring glory to your name.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Prayer after Communion:

Let us pray.
God our Father,
in this spiritual food
you have given back to us the sacrifice we offered you in
thanksgiving,
the saving sacrament of Christ your Son.
By these gifts of strength and joy sustain us in your service
and bring us to your gift of eternal life.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Final Blessing

The use of a more solemn form of the blessing would be appropriate at this time. There are various choices one is provided for you below.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Priest: May the God of all consolation bless you in every way and grant you peace all the days of your life.

All: Amen.

Priest: May he free you from all anxiety and strengthen your hearts in his love.

All: Amen.

Priest: May he enrich you with his gifts of faith, hope, and love so that what you do in this life will bring you to the happiness of everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Priest: May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father+, the Son+ and the Holy Spirit+, be upon you and remain with you for ever.

All: Amen.

Priest: Let us go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

In Various Public Circumstances

In Thanksgiving to God

Reading From the Old Testament

First Option

A reading from the first Book of Kings

1 Kings 8:55-61

Blessed is the Lord God who has granted rest to his people.

King Solomon stood and blessed the whole congregation of Israel, saying in a loud voice:

"Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, just as he promised.

Not a single word has gone unfulfilled of the entire generous promise he made through his servant Moses. May the Lord, our God, be with us as he was with our fathers and may he not forsake us nor cast us off.

May he draw our hearts to himself, that we may follow him in everything and keep the commands, statutes, and ordinances which he enjoined on our fathers.

May this prayer I have offered to the Lord, our God, be present to him day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and of his people Israel as each day requires,

that all the peoples of the earth may know the Lord is God and there is no other.

You must be wholly devoted to the Lord, our God, observing his statutes and keeping his commandments, as on this day." This is the Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 145:2-3,4-5,6-7,8-9,10-11

R: I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

Every day will I bless you,
and I will praise your name forever and ever.
Great is the Lord and highly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.

R: I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

Generation after generation praises your works

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

and proclaims your might.
They speak of the splendour of your glorious majesty
and tell of your wondrous works.

R: I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

They discourse of the power of your terrible deeds
and declare your greatness.
They publish the fame of your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your justice.

R: I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
The Lord is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

R: I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord,
and let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of your Kingdom
and speak of your might.

R: I will praise your name for ever, Lord.

Reading From the New Testament

Second Option

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians
Colossians 3:12-17 Give thanks to God the Father through Christ.

Brothers and sisters:
Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,
bearing with one another and forgiving one another,
if one has a grievance against another;
as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.
And over all these put on love,
that is, the bond of perfection.
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,
the peace into which you were also called in one Body.
And be thankful.
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another,
singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
with gratitude in your hearts to God.
And whatever you do, in word or in deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
Matthew 11 :25-30

You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, you have revealed them to little ones.

At that time Jesus answered:

"I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
for although you have hidden these things
from the wise and the learned
you have revealed them to little ones.

Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father.

No one knows the Son except the Father,
and no one knows the Father except the Son
and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened,
and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

The Gospel of the Lord.

OR

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

John 16:20-22

No one will take your joy away from you. Jesus said to his disciples:

"Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn,
while the world rejoices;

you will grieve, but your grief will become joy.

When a woman is in labour, she is in anguish because her hour has arrived;
but when she has given birth to a child,

she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy

that a child has been born into the world. So you also are now in anguish.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice,
and no one will take your joy away from you."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Optional Concluding Ceremony

This option can be used in conjunction with either options A or B.

Before Mass

During the prelude, the deacon (or server) incenses the entire assembly by walking throughout the room, using all the aisles.

Introductory Rite

After the greeting, the priest says:

On this ordinary Sunday in Ordinary Time, we come to an out-of-the-ordinary event. As we celebrate Mass here for the last time, let us enter with full hearts into thanksgiving for the gifts of God and the graces of this place.

(The Mass is celebrated in the usual way)

After the Post communion Prayer

Priest: Blessed are you, loving God.
In this place we have known your love.
We trust our future to your care.
Blessed be God for ever!
All: Blessed be God for ever!

Priest: As we leave this place of worship, we give thanks to God for all the blessings we have found here.

Candle bearers lead the procession to the various areas.

At the font:

Priest: Let us remember the baptisms celebrated here...

(pause)

We thank you and we praise you for the life of faith given to all who have passed through the waters of new life at this font.

Blessed be God for ever!

All: Blessed be God for ever!

At the confessional or reconciliation chapel:

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Priest: Let us remember the times when we have been forgiven, comforted, consoled in the sacrament of penance

(pause)

We thank you and we praise you for the healing and reconciling love that has been given through the sacrament of penance in this church.

Blessed be God for ever!

All: Blessed be God for ever!

At the station of the cross, at a significant statue or icon, or in a shrine (repeat as necessary):

Priest: Let us remember the generations of prayer and devotion that this sacred image has inspired...

(pause)

We thank you for inspiring in us here true devotion to [the way of Christ's Cross; Blessed Mother Mary; Saint...]

Blessed be God for ever!

All: Blessed be God for ever!

At the ambo:

Priest: Let us remember the power of God's word proclaimed here in scripture and in preaching...

(pause)

We thank you and we praise you for your holy word proclaimed here in faith and preached here in sincerity. May it echo always in our hearts.

Blessed be God for ever!

All: Blessed be God for ever!

At the altar:

Priest: Let us remember the times we have gathered for the sacred banquet: the Triduum kept each year, the Sundays on which we worshiped faithfully, the first communion celebrations, the feast days of saints and martyrs, the weddings witnessed, the funerals held here in hope.

Let us pray.

(pause for longer time)

Priest: God our refuge, our home is in you.

You are greater than any temple, church or cathedral that can be built by human hands, yet in this place we have met your divine majesty. This church building has been a place of blessing for us. Protect us on our way.

Lead us to new friends in another faith community. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Priest: The life of this community will continue in another place. [Name], receive this [name of item] that will be used at [name of new church].

Take it (directly) from this place to [name of the new parish priest] as a sign that our journey of faith will continue there.

Use a solemn blessing found in the sacramentary - #12, 13, or 14.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

During the singing of the final hymn, all may be invited to come forward and kiss the altar (or offer a profound bow) as a final gesture of leave-taking. The final hymn could be "Now thank we all our God," "Holy God, we praise thy name," a hymn in honour of the parish titular, or something familiar. All process out of the building.

Final Blessing

The use of a more solemn form of the blessing would be appropriate at this time. There are various choices, one is provided for you below.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Priest: May the God of all consolation bless you in every way and grant you peace all the days of your life.

All: Amen.

Priest: May he free you from all anxiety and strengthen your hearts in his love.

All: Amen.

Priest: May he enrich you with his gifts of faith, hope, and love so that what you do in this life will bring you to the happiness of everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Priest: May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever.

All: Amen.

Priest: Let us go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Parish Handbook for Deepening Collaboration, Linking and Merging

Acknowledgements:

The Bishop's Office, Lancaster, would like gratefully to acknowledge the assistance given by the Worship Offices in the Dioceses of Greenbay and Harrisburg and the Archdioceses of Boston, Pittsburgh and Chicago in the development of the liturgical portion of this manual.

We would also like gratefully to acknowledge the permission given by:

- Liturgy Training Publications to reprint their article which is referred to in this manual as Option C copyright notice is printed on the first page of Option C
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to reprint scripture readings from Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, copyright @ 1970, 1997, 1998, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. Summaries, and the titles and conclusion of the readings, from the Lectionary for Mass@ 1968,1981,1997,
- International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc., Washington, D.C.