

Pastoral Plan

Advent 2021



Pastoral Plan

Archdiocese of Liverpool
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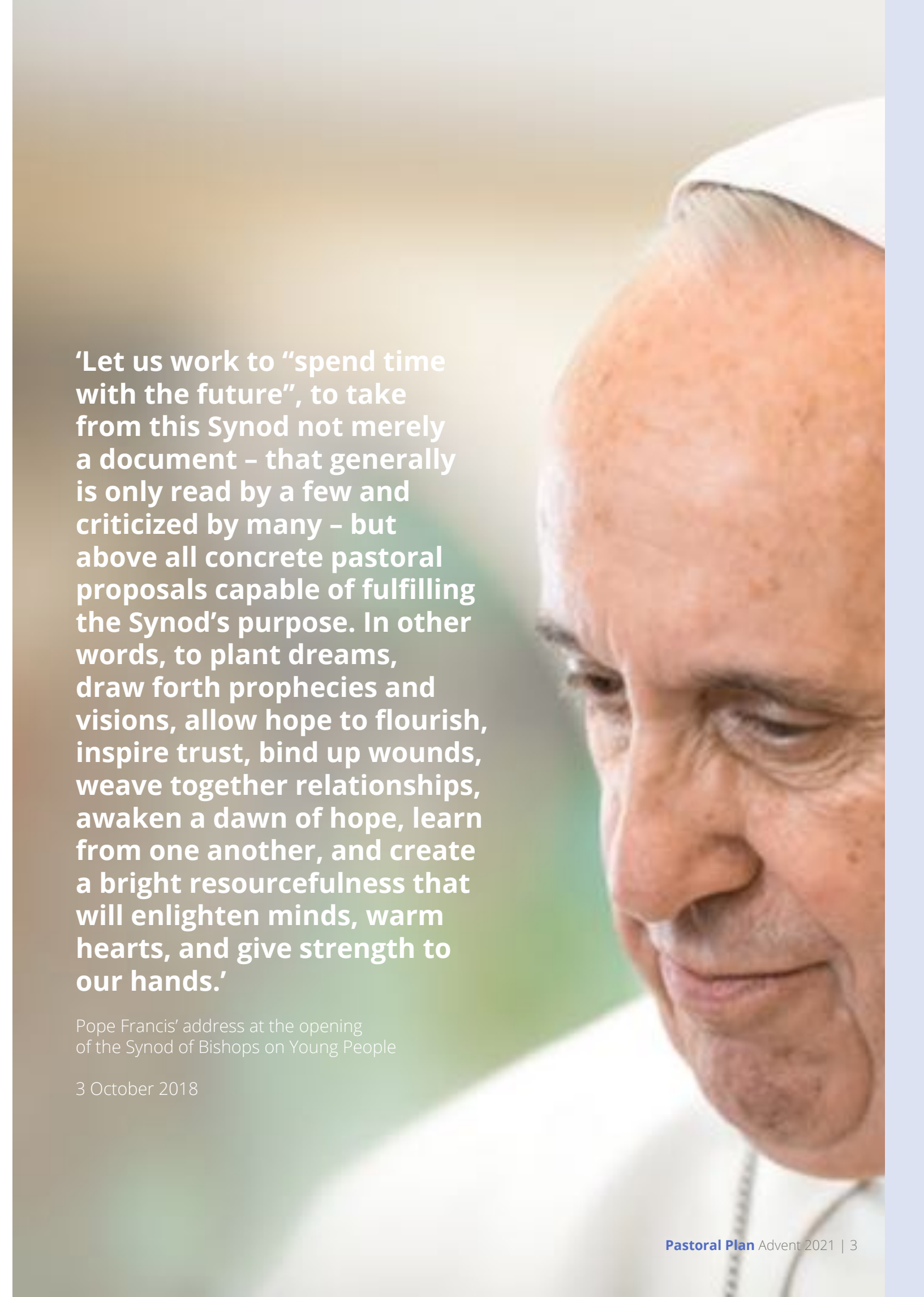
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A close-up, profile view of Pope Francis, looking downwards and to the left. He is wearing his white papal hat (zucchetto) and a white cassock. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and white.

'Let us work to "spend time with the future", to take from this Synod not merely a document – that generally is only read by a few and criticized by many – but above all concrete pastoral proposals capable of fulfilling the Synod's purpose. In other words, to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, and give strength to our hands.'

Pope Francis' address at the opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People

3 October 2018

The Pastoral Plan

Becoming the Church God is calling us to be

To all the people of the Archdiocese of Liverpool,

In June 2021 we celebrated our archdiocesan Synod. This was a wonderful gathering (even though it had to be a Zoom gathering). It was the fruit of four years of prayer, listening, discerning and planning. The day itself, and the celebration of Mass in the cathedral the next day, made me feel very proud to be your archbishop.

The whole journey gave us an experience of being what Pope Francis calls 'the Synodal Church' - a Church that listens carefully to how the Holy Spirit speaks through the lives, wisdom and concerns of all its members. I fervently hope that we will build on this experience of synodality and make it an essential part of our archdiocesan life in the years ahead.

Many people, from all over the archdiocese, lay and clergy, old and young have taken part in a variety of ways. We invited them to take a long, clear look at the world around us - a world that is changing faster than ever before (and not just because of Covid). We invited them, too, to look very seriously at where we are as a Church - at our present realities, and our challenges for the future. And we asked ourselves: what kind of Church is God calling us to become here in the archdiocese? What is the Holy Spirit saying to us at this critical point in history?

I put before you today a vision for the future of the Church in this archdiocese which has arisen from the way the Synod members voted in June 2021.

The Synod considered 19 recommendations. The three that received the most votes were concerning evangelisation, lay ministry and young people. But all 19 were clearly endorsed by the people of the archdiocese.

If we are to truly embrace these and all that we have learned from our journey over these years, then Christ must be our starting point and there are four issues that we must be alert to which will underpin every aspect of our pastoral plan.

There is need for us to:

- be immersed in the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of humanity today;
- be brave and creative in renewing local structures;
- develop leadership to attend to changing needs;
- embed synodality in every aspect of archdiocesan life.

Thinking carefully about these issues alongside all that the Synod has given us, has led me to place before you six action areas that will be our focus in the years to come.

1. Becoming a Church that accompanies people through life.
2. Becoming a Church that honours the vocation of all the baptised.
3. Becoming a Church where synodality is embedded.
4. Becoming a Church that renews its organisational structures and administers its property to serve its mission.
5. Becoming a Church where young people and young adults flourish.
6. Becoming a Church that cares for its priests.

I have used the word "becoming" not because we haven't already been doing many of these things and often doing them very well, but because we are going to develop and strengthen our Catholic life in policy, in decision making and action in these areas.

The call of Pope Francis, and of ecumenical councils and popes before him, to be a Church which accompanies people, walks with people, is the key change in attitude and approach that I want to place before you. Walking with others, accompanying others, will influence the way we live and work as Catholic Christians in the archdiocese. It will help us re-think our approach to sacramental preparation, to our relationship with the world, to our care for the environment, to training for every ministry, to our work with young people and young adults, to our care for priests, to our structures and how we use our buildings and to how we embed synodality in the daily life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Liverpool.



This plan could not have emerged in the way it has without you. If I had tried to write a pastoral plan at the start of our journey it would not be the plan that I share with you today. We have all listened to God who has spoken to us through your work, your reflections, your ideas and your passion for the Church and her place in the world. God has spoken to the archdiocese through her people, lay, religious and clergy. We have been accompanied and encouraged along our journey by our ecumenical partners and by many other people who walk the path alongside us.

Some of the things that we heard have fallen outside the remit of a diocesan Synod, but from the outset I have been committed to sharing these with the wider Church. I will do that.

This pastoral plan is to serve as the charter for implementing the fruit of Synod 2020. It begins with Christ at the centre and then points out the signposts of our journey. Then there is a detailed unpacking of the six areas of development. These six areas will evolve and be worked on in the years to come. Finally, in a concluding section, I reaffirm that “Becoming the Church God is calling us to be” is the work of the whole Church in the archdiocese empowered by the Spirit of the risen Lord.

+ Malcolm K' Mahon OP

Most Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP
Archbishop of Liverpool

Christ at the Centre

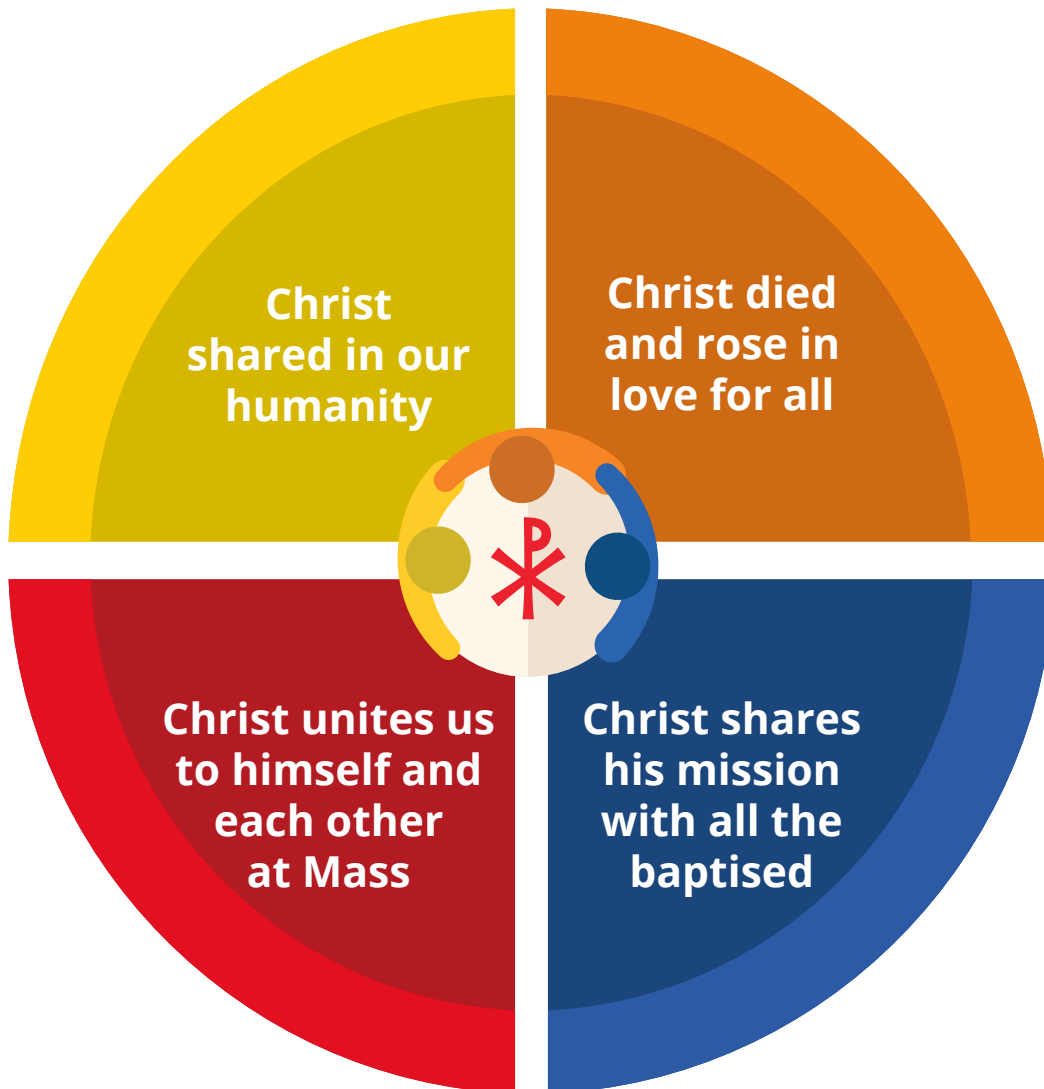
Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

In calling Synod 2020 we affirmed a belief that God speaks to us as we listen to the voices of all the people, lay, religious, deacons, priests and bishops of the archdiocese. This has been made real in our experience of synodality, as we listened to and discerned with a great cloud of witnesses. So our pastoral plan begins by a call to closely focus our sights on Jesus. But where will we find him? Here, we must be careful with our language; this section of the pastoral plan is not entitled 'Putting Christ at the Centre.' We could not 'put' him at the centre of the

Church: Christ is the heart of the Church and it is he who draws us to himself. Nor do we 'put' him at the centre of the world: he already walks the paths of humanity and is present above all in the poor and the broken. Instead, whether in our life together in the Church or in our mission to the world, what we are called to do is to turn to Christ, to recognise his presence and to respond to his invitation to walk with him.

With Christ at the centre we can then reflect on what kind of Church God is calling us to be.



1. Christ shared in our humanity

The Church wishes to serve this single end: that each person may be able to find Christ, in order that Christ may walk with each person the path of life, with the power of the truth about humanity and the world that is contained in the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption and with the power of the love that is radiated by that truth.

Redemptor Hominis, 13, paragraph 1

St John Paul II wrote these words shortly after his election as pope, and they set out the programme for his pontificate. The same words also express the core principles that undergird this, our archdiocesan pastoral plan. The starting point for our engagement with other people is the conviction that Christ's birth, life and death has affected and changed the whole of humanity. The Second Vatican Council taught that, 'By his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.'¹

The fact that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' has established a



solidarity between Christ and all of humanity.² There is nobody in this world who is not in some way united with Christ, whether they realise it or not. Christ walks alongside every person through the events of their life. He longs for them to recognise him just as the disciples on the road to Emmaus recognised him at the breaking of bread. He desires to open their eyes and hearts to the full realisation of their dignity and value in God's eyes. He wants them to have the fulness of life for which God made them.

This is what St John Paul meant when he wrote of 'the power of the truth about man and the world.' Here, again, he was looking back to Vatican II,

which made the extraordinary statement that 'the truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.'³ Our lives with all their ups and downs, the frequently chaotic lives of our families and loved ones, the joyful and frightening things that happen across the human family, only make sense if we look at them through the eyes of Christ and understand them in terms of God's plan for humanity and the entire cosmos. Consequently, God calls us to a radical openness, especially towards those whom the world quickly rejects. As Pope Francis has written, 'Appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves our love.'⁴

2. Christ died and rose in love for all

The Church does not look at humanity and the world through rose-tinted glasses: she recognises that both 'the call to grandeur and the depths of misery' are 'part of human experience.'⁵ People are capable of great generosity, creativity and beauty: we can each give joy and comfort to others. Yet, humanity can also inflict terrible suffering. Every day we hear news of war and violence around the world. More locally, the Synod listening phase drew attention to the inequalities and patterns of exclusion and discrimination that run through our own society. Things that people said during the listening phase forcibly reminded us that the Church herself has failed to protect some of the most vulnerable from harm and abuse. This must be a source of pain and shame for all of us. And even if these miseries do not touch our own lives directly, we must all face the reality of sickness and death in our own bodies and in those whom we love.

The Church has one response to the contradictions of human existence: it is Christ. Not only has he shared in the ups and downs of daily existence, but he has transformed what it is to be human. He responded to human misery with compassion and faced human anger and hatred with a self-giving love. That love was most clearly expressed on the cross: when confronted by human rejection he did not retaliate. Instead, he opened his arms in union with all the powerless, the broken, the suffering and

the excluded. The gift he made of himself on the cross was the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world and the source of our healing. His immersion into humanity was so absolute that his resurrection from the dead likewise affected and changed the whole of humanity. Far from being just an individual act of Christ himself, it marked the beginning of a renewal of all humankind and indeed of the cosmos. On Easter Sunday the whole creation was set on a new path, towards a new destiny: we are no longer heading towards an obliterating death; we are on course to new life and the renewal of all things.⁶ The path of love through the realities of human life, through suffering and darkness, always driven forward by hope - this is the path of life that, in St John Paul's terms, Christ longs to walk with every human being. As the Second Vatican Council taught:

Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from his Gospel, they overwhelm us. Christ has risen, destroying death by his death; he has lavished life upon us so that, as sons [and daughters] in the Son, we can cry out in the Spirit, 'Abba, Father.'

Gaudium et Spes, 22, paragraph 6

The Church calls Christ's journey through death, resurrection and ascension to the Father 'the paschal mystery.' This is the fundamental truth of Christianity and it lies at the heart of everything that we do as Church. It is at the centre of our worship, it is the core content of our teaching, and it gives us the pattern for our lives.

The paschal mystery also gives us the pattern for our relationship with creation. Pope Francis has reminded us that 'in the Christian understanding of the world, the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ, present from the beginning: All things have been created through him and for him.'⁷ Furthermore, as we have seen, Christ's resurrection is the beginning of a renewal of the entire cosmos. In this light - and faced with the threats to our environment - Pope Francis has called for an 'ecological conversion.' He has written that our encounter with Christ on the journey of our own life should 'become evident in [our] relationship with the world around [us]. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.'⁸

3. Christ shared his mission with all the baptised



We were called to pattern our lives on Christ when we were baptised. The Second Vatican Council taught that, 'by baptism men [and women] are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with him, are buried with him, and rise with him; they receive the spirit of adoption as sons [and daughters].'⁹ We emerge from the font as people who have been profoundly joined to Christ and made one with him and his mission.

So, what is the mission of Christ? The New Testament and the teaching of the Church identify three 'offices' of Christ, three aspects of his mission: he is priest, prophet and king. He is priest because his entire life was an act of worship of the Father, culminating in the sacrifice of the cross.¹⁰ As prophet he proclaimed the Kingdom of God, and is himself the Way, the Truth and the Life.¹¹ As king, he conquers evil and gathers humanity and all creation into unity¹² and presents it to his Father.¹³ His kingship is one of love and service, and we see it most clearly in the image of the Good Shepherd.¹⁴ The Second Vatican Council teaches that all the baptised have a share in the three offices of Christ as priest, prophet and king.¹⁵ All Christians are called to worship God with their lives, to proclaim the truth of God by their words and actions and to dedicate themselves to the service of others.

In a sense, the priestly office embraces both of the others, since everything that we say

and do is part of the offering of ourselves that we make to God in the Mass. We offer ourselves in union with Christ 'through him and with him and in him', as we say in every Mass. The unity between Christ and the baptised is so complete that the Church readily speaks of Christians as 'a priestly people.'¹⁶ Baptism and confirmation consecrate Christians to share in a 'common' priesthood. It is by means of his priestly people that Christ himself 'walks the path of life with each person': he is present wherever and whenever Christians 'walk humbly before God', bearing witness to the truth, attending to the needs of others and making sacrifices to do the right thing. Christ's mission reaches into workplaces, football stadia, places of leisure and commerce, and countless homes by means of his holy people, living out their baptismal priesthood.

We are also deeply grateful for the support and encouragement of other Christians who have walked alongside us on our Synod journey. We are bound to them by our common baptism and together we are members of the body of Christ.¹⁷ The experience of working ecumenically is part of the heritage of our archdiocese: we are better together. As we look to the future we seek to work in close collaboration wherever possible with our ecumenical brothers and sisters in Christ.

4. Christ unites us to himself and each other at Mass

Throughout the Synod process many people raised concerns about having access to Mass and the Sacraments. One person's anxiety that she faced 'a lonely and sacramentally-starved old age' spoke for many. We need to ask the question that lies under those concerns: what is it about the Mass that makes it so important that its celebration should underpin our pastoral planning?

The Mass is the focal point of our faith. Vatican II described it as 'the fount and apex of the whole Christian life.'¹⁸ It is in the Mass most of all that Jesus is with us, teaching us, feeding us, forgiving us, and renewing us for mission. When we receive his Body and Blood, we receive 'holy communion', the sacred bond with God and with one another in Christ for which we were made. Created in the image of God who is the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all human beings long deep down for the unity, peace and communion that only Christ can give. Jesus wants to walk the path of life with every human being to teach us about communion and to give us this precious gift. In 2001, Pope John Paul himself said that 'the great challenge' facing us in the new millennium is 'to make the Church *the home and the school of communion* ... if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings.'¹⁹

Everything that we have talked about so far in this document - our union with Christ, our

baptismal priesthood, our mission in the world - all flow out from the Eucharist and at the same time lead back to it. This is because at the very heart of the Eucharist is the paschal mystery of Christ: This is because at the very heart of the Eucharist is the paschal mystery of Christ:

The Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading those things "which were in all the scriptures concerning him" (Luke 24:27), celebrating the Eucharist in which "the victory and triumph of his death are again made present", and at the same time giving thanks "to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15) in Christ Jesus, "in praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:12), through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sacrosanctum Concilium, 6

As St John Paul II put it, 'the Eucharist, which is in an outstanding way the sacrament of the paschal mystery, stands at the centre of the Church's life.'²⁰ This is because the Eucharist is not merely a communal meal, nor an imaginative remembrance of Christ and his saving actions. Instead, 'when the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord's death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and



the work of our redemption is carried out.'²¹ The communion for which we were made is given to us and we are called to grow in communion and to go out to spread communion in the world.

As a consequence, each celebration of Mass involves the whole Church and the entire world. As St John Paul II wrote, 'Liturgy is never anyone's private property, be it of the celebrant or of the community in which the mysteries are celebrated.'²² Instead, we always gather to celebrate the Eucharist in communion with the universal Church - this is why during every Eucharistic Prayer we name not only our own archbishop but also the Pope.



This is a constant reminder that the Bishop of Rome, 'as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity of both the bishops and of the faithful.'²³ By naming him at our Mass, we unite our offering with the whole Church throughout the world.

Furthermore, the global span of our celebration of the Eucharist extends beyond the confines of the Church because we offer the Eucharist for the whole world. This includes the people in our own of our Mass-going community, including those who may not express any faith at all. local areas who are not part. Many of them experience brokenness,

fear and despair, as well as joy and great contentment. As we gather at the start of Mass, we bring them into the celebration and offer them together with ourselves in union with Christ's own sacrifice. Then, at the end of Mass we are sent out back into the world we share with them as the priestly people through whom Christ wants to continue his mission of bringing unity, peace and communion to humanity and to the whole of creation.

From this perspective, the meaning of the call to full, active, conscious participation in the liturgy made by many 20th century popes and by the Second Vatican Council becomes clearer.²⁴ Our

participation in the liturgy is not ultimately about doing (though that can be important) but about being and becoming. Through our actions, words and silences at Mass, we are united more closely with Christ's own offering of himself to the Father in love and sent out to be his ministers in the world. As Pope Benedict XVI has written: 'there can be no active participation in the sacred mysteries without an accompanying effort to participate actively in the life of the Church as a whole, including a missionary commitment to bring Christ's love into the life of society.'²⁵

Signposts to the future

The Lament

When the Archbishop announced his decision to hold an archdiocesan Synod he set out the scale of the challenge:

The 2nd Vatican Council (1962-65) invited the Church to look at the signs of the times, to reflect on what they mean and to take appropriate action. This includes a re-discovering and a re-energizing of the vocation of all the baptised. In 1962 there were 264,000 people at Mass each Sunday, last year that number had fallen to 47,000. In 1962 there were over 400 priests serving the archdiocese and now there are just 120. This means that we have to be open to change. The work of the Gospel is no less urgent, the call to make disciples has not changed, but we have to find new ways to do this in the light of our changed circumstances.²⁶

We are in an uncomfortable place, even though the landscape of archdiocesan life remains familiar. Everything continues to revolve around the same patterns of activity, the same buildings and organisational structures that we have inherited from our grandparents and their parents before them. The way in which we have organised our parishes certainly has been adapted over the past decades. However, much of that has been about trying to keep on doing what we have always done, only with fewer priests and fewer people in



church.

We have not really embraced the 'new ways' of which the Archbishop wrote. There has been no radical shift in the focus of our energies, nor an intensification of our sense of mission to the world beyond our own four walls.

So long as the surroundings are familiar, it is tempting to avoid taking radical steps towards the future. We could try to carry on with the way we feel things should be. We may cling to a model of Catholic life focussed upon a local parish, ministered to by its parish priest, with a seamless link between parish, school and the parishioners' families. This model of Catholic life exercises a powerful emotional pull. Many of our priests were ordained when this was still the norm, so their expectations of priesthood focus upon ministry to a clearly defined parish community. Lay people may also have a strong sense, or memory, of

belonging to a parish with its own unique identity and sense of community. So priests and laity alike may be pained by any radical move away from the way in which we have lived and worked as an archdiocese until now. For some it may even feel like a betrayal of the past.

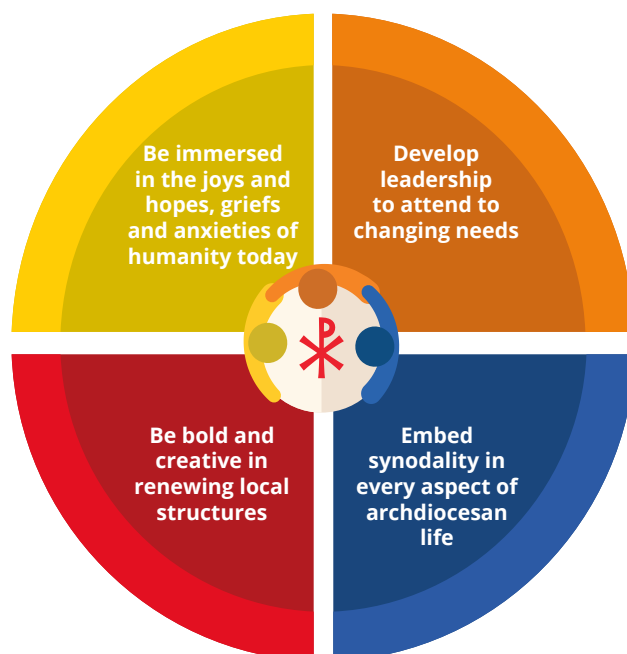
However, we cannot continue as we have been doing. The challenges that we face and the mission that Christ has given to his Church call for something new. This must be rooted in a profound gratitude for the past, in a care to be faithful custodians of what has been entrusted to us, but we must also be willing to heed the challenge to proclaim the Gospel in our age. This pastoral plan cannot be just a case of doing some things differently, of adding new types of activities or tinkering around the edges of our structures. Instead, we will need to leave behind a lot of things that are familiar. We need to learn the art of lamentation.

Four signposts

It is clear from the profound and meaningful way in which people engaged in the listening and discerning which were integral to our Synod journey that we are called in our pastoral planning not to focus solely on matters internal to the archdiocese, but to turn to Christ and the world. This was clearly expressed in the formation of the Synod recommendations and in the outcome of the Synod voting. The pastoral plan could easily become a set of 'solutions' to a narrow set of problems, for example, by seeking a response to the falling numbers of active priests or the stark reduction of people attending Church. These are real issues, of course. However, when we turn to Christ as our starting point, our field of vision expands, and the true scale and nature of the challenges that we face becomes clear.

- How do we ensure that our pastoral plan is shot through with a sense of wonder at what it is to be human?
- How do we sacrificially serve others - especially those who stand on the margins of society in whose lives the face of the suffering Christ is reflected?
- How do we serve those who stand on the margins of the Church and who frequently include many of our young Catholics?
- How do we factor a just and careful use of the world's resources and care for the environment into all the decisions we take as an archdiocese?
- How we build up and support all members of the Church in their appreciation and exercise of their own baptismal priesthood?
- How do we understand and value what is distinctive about the ordained or ministerial priesthood?
- How best do we work with brothers and sisters belonging to other Christian denominations and with members of other faith traditions?
- How do we ensure that the decisions we make about buildings and about priests and people working together are made in an authentically synodal manner?
- How do we ensure that those decisions reflect the full significance of the celebration of the Mass in the life of the Church?

That list is daunting, and more challenges could easily be added. The sheer scale of what lies before us may seem overwhelming. So we need to map carefully the road forward. We begin with four signposts that point the direction towards to our future life as an archdiocese.



Signpost one

The Second Vatican Council proclaimed the solidarity of the Church with all people:



The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of human beings. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for everyone. That is why this community realises that it is truly linked with humanity and its history by the deepest of bonds.

Gaudium et Spes, 1

This is the starting point of the archdiocese's journey into the future. We take the first step when we recognise that we share a 'common home' with the whole human race. Their lifestyles and values may be very different to ours; they may understand the world very differently to the way we do, but we share with them a common humanity and God reaches out to them no less than he does to us. As fellow human beings we resonate with the high and low points of their lives. We sense how they feel in the messiness and the joys, the brokenness and the healing of their lives, because we recognise an echo of those feelings in our own lives and the lives of our families.

God hears that echo, too. Jesus walked alongside all kinds of people: men and women, friends and strangers, people of his own race and culture and people who were complete foreigners. Through the experience of his own life and through his encounters with other people, Jesus has felt and has understood what it is to be human. He met people with compassion and understanding – and with wonder and amazement, too. At the same time, he recognised and challenged humanity's capacity for oppression, violence and evil.

He calls us to do the same today - to accompany people in the complexity and diversity of their lives. He invites us to walk alongside them patiently, with a sense of solidarity and genuine interest in and concern about the things that are going on in their lives. We might sometimes feel uncomfortable at the stories they tell us along the way but as people encounter us, they can also encounter Christ. And we in turn encounter Christ in them, especially when we serve the poor, the broken and the people pushed to the edges of our society.

Therefore, we cannot plan for the future of our archdiocese unless we embrace the call to look outwards. This is what Pope Francis means when he speaks about the whole Church being set on a mission-footing. What this means in practice is truly challenging. As we begin to work with our pastoral plan, we ask what the effect on our life as an archdiocese might be if we take Pope Francis at his word:

Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. ... I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with

Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat'

Evangelii Gaudium, 49

Signpost two



One of the four Synod themes that emerged from our listening process was 'All are called and gifted.' We should not be surprised at the appearance of this theme. If the core of the synodal approach is to listen together to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church, then we cannot miss the fact that the Spirit is lavish in pouring out gifts upon the Christian community:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

The last few words from this extract of St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians are crucial: the gifts given by the Spirit are intended 'for the common good.' We might be daunted by the task that lies ahead of us as an archdiocese, but even before we took the first step on this journey God had already seeded our future by gifting members of our community with exactly the gifts that will serve us for what lies ahead. Part of our discernment is to identify what these gifts are, and how we can support and encourage those to whom they have been given.

All the gifts that the Spirit gives will be gifts of service. For most people this will be done in their family life and in their day to day work. For some that service will be as ordained ministers or religious or as lay people entrusted with a particular ministry or responsibility.

If we open our ears to the Spirit speaking through the lives of people around us and our eyes to the gifts and callings that the Spirit is generating within the Church, then something is likely to happen: we will recognise that new forms of ministry and leadership are emerging in our midst that genuinely respond to the needs of our time.

The challenge is to set in place systems of training and support for leadership. We must take a comprehensive look at how we prepare priests, deacons and laypeople to be leaders in our community, and where necessary we must implement a radical overhaul of how we equip them for the task.

Signpost three



When we speak of 'structures' here, we are not only thinking about buildings, but also about a network of committees, departments, and institutions at every level of the archdiocese. This network ranges from the Archbishop's Council, the Council of Priests and the archdiocesan support services to our deaneries and parishes and religious houses.

In the past we have looked at different ways of arranging the local structures of parish and deanery. 'Leaving Safe Harbours' (2005-2015) sought to engage with the challenges. However, despite the dedicated work of many people, it did little to change the patterns of Catholic life and sense of mission on the ground in most parts of the archdiocese. Today the challenges we face are even more pressing. This is not only because of our local situation but because of the urgent call to the whole Church to look outside itself:

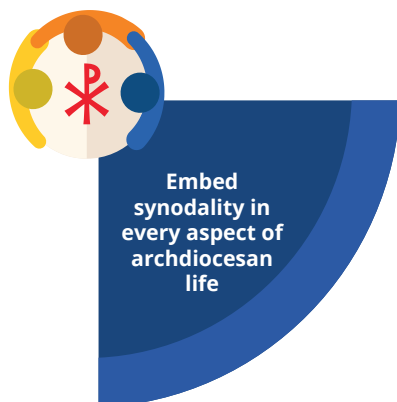
I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself.

Evangelii Gaudium, 27

In responding to this call we will be responsible stewards of the heritage we have received from the past. We will strive to safeguard the natural environment that we pass on to the future. But we will also look closely at our structures and ask one key question: how effectively do they equip us to serve the mission of the Church in the world? The plan invites each department and committee of the archdiocese, each deanery and parish to consider how it can serve that mission in more focused ways. The plan challenges the various parts of the archdiocesan family to collaborate and support each other in that task; it calls us to change from a structured network of parishes, committees and departments into something more flexible and organic, something more like a family.

In promoting the renewal of local structures, the archdiocese will not apply the plan in a rigid and centralised manner. Instead, it will encourage and support a flexible and ground-up approach so that local areas can be bold and creative in finding ways to go forward, ways that are true to their own situation and that respond to their own challenges.

Signpost four



We have reached this stage in our journey by following a synodal path. It has been a powerful experience: what we have heard from each other has been challenging and inspiring. Yet the most significant part of our life as a synodal Church still lies ahead of us.

Pope Francis has said several times that God expects the whole Church to follow the path of synodality. He has said, 'the world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her life.' For the Pope, listening is an essential component of that cooperation. It is 'more than simply hearing. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth" in order to know what he "says to the Churches".'²⁷

This is the only sure way we can maintain the momentum of change and development that the Synod asked for. We will make synodality our archdiocesan way of life so that it becomes the normal way we do things. Two things need to be said here. Synodality does not mean that we become a democracy: determining our direction by majority voting is not the way of the Church. To make it so would only introduce a new kind of Church politics in which conflicting interest groups jostled for influence, and division would follow. At the same time, we must guard against a culture of clericalism. Pope Francis tells us that clericalism 'tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people,' and 'gradually extinguishes the prophetic flame to which the entire Church is called to bear witness in the heart of her peoples.'²⁸ Synodality leads us away from these two dangers by stressing the unity of the Church and the dignity of all the baptised. Synodality recognises that the Holy Spirit is speaking prophetically in and through all members of the Church. Therefore, if our archbishop is to carry out his role as 'authentic guardian, interpreter and witness of the faith,'²⁹ he needs to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Church, 'not by himself, but by listening to the People of God, who share in Christ's prophetic office.'³⁰

Some of the essential building blocks are already in place, for example, the Council of Priests. However, Pope Francis warns us that a synodal Church can only begin to take shape, 'to the extent that these organizations keep connected to the "base" and start from people and their daily problems.'³¹ For that to happen we must complement what we already have with new ways of communicating and new structures for taking our work forward. We must ensure that the archdiocese remains connected to the realities of people's lives and that any new bodies we create are not simply closed echo-chambers for a few people. Crucially, we must find ways to keep hearing the voices of young people and those who are excluded or oppressed by our society.

Finally, Pope Francis has said the Church needs to become truly synodal for its mission to the world. If we model what we say about synodality, if we become a Church of participation, solidarity and transparency, then we can become a sign of hope to humanity:

Our gaze also extends to humanity as a whole. A synodal Church is like a standard lifted up among the nations (cf. Is 11:12) in a world which — while calling for participation, solidarity and transparency in public administration — often consigns the fate of entire peoples to the grasp of small but powerful groups. As a Church which "journeys together" with men and women, sharing the travails of history, let us cherish the dream that a rediscovery of the inviolable dignity of peoples and of the function of authority as service will also be able to help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity, and thus bring about a more beautiful and humane world for coming generations.'³²

The six areas of development

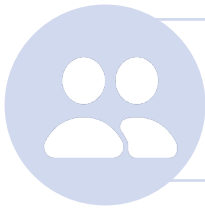
In order to be faithful to Christ at the Centre and to follow the signposts given to us by the Synod journey six areas of development have been identified.



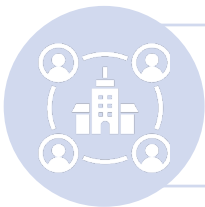
Becoming a Church that accompanies people through life



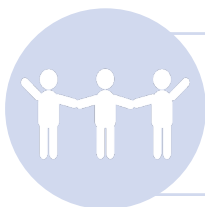
Becoming a Church that honours the vocation of all the baptised



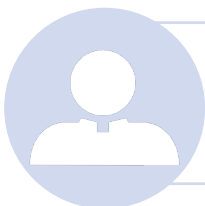
Becoming a Church where synodality is embedded



Becoming a Church that renews its organisational structures and administers its property to serve its mission



Becoming a Church where young people and young adults flourish



Becoming a Church that cares for its priests

Each of the development areas is led by a coordinating team who are taking forward the organic development of an area. This means that this document is not a final finished piece of work but will be continually evolving as more work is done and as the process of listening and discerning continues.

An Archdiocesan Synodal Council will be formed (see area 3) which, with the Archbishop, will hold the responsibility of the accountability and on-going development of the pastoral plan.

1. Becoming a Church that accompanies people through life

The Synod identified the key priority for the Archdiocese of Liverpool is that it should look outward, it should evangelise. As the Catholic Church is in the world, we acknowledge the goodness in all people in all their diversity. And hearing again our mission to make Jesus known and loved in our world, we seek to re-orientate our archdiocese to walk alongside all our brothers and sisters and share with them the love that God has for each of us.



Listening to the Scriptures

(Luke 24:28-32)

They drew near to Emmaus, the village to which they were going. Jesus acted as if he were going further. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognised him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?'



On 19 June 2021 we began our archdiocesan Synod day by reflecting on this story. Two unnamed disciples of Jesus set out on a journey away from Jerusalem on the evening of the first Easter Sunday – filled not with joy but with sadness, uncertainty, and disillusion. As the disciples walked, Jesus joined them on their journey, though they did not recognise him. At that point, they were heading in completely the wrong direction – walking away from the community of believers in Jerusalem. But Jesus did not say to them, 'Stop! Turn around right now!' Instead, he walked alongside them even though every step took them away from where they should have been going. Pope Francis has called what then took place Jesus' 'therapy of hope' (General Audience, 24 May 2017). Jesus listened attentively to what was going on in the disciples' lives - he gave them the gift of his time, listening 'unconditionally, without being offended or shocked, tired or bored'.

Then, Jesus offered them the Word of Life. When Jesus made to move on further, the disciples offered him the gift of their hospitality and invited him to eat with them. At the table they moved from being Jesus' fellow-travellers to becoming his companions - literally, those who sat down and shared bread with him. It was in the intimacy of that companionship, as Jesus broke bread with them, that they recognised him.



Listening to the teaching of the Church

The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this 'art of accompaniment' which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.

Pope Francis: Evangelii Gaudium, 169

Pope Francis asked why the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had left Jerusalem in the first place. Perhaps they were scandalised, he suggested, 'by the failure of the Messiah in whom they had hoped and who now appeared utterly vanquished, even after the third day.' He then made a link to our own time - weren't the two disciples very similar to many people in our own time who 'think that the Church – their Jerusalem – can no longer offer them anything meaningful and important?' Perhaps, mused Pope Francis, 'the Church appears too weak' for such people today, 'perhaps too distant from their needs ... perhaps too cold, perhaps too caught up with itself, perhaps a prisoner of its own rigid formulas.' (Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil, 28 July 2013, no. 3)

So, how should we respond to people who think like that about the Church - people who are not just our colleagues, neighbours and friends, but frequently also members of our own families? In the same way that Jesus did with the two disciples, the Pope replies. On the road to Emmaus Jesus gave us an example of 'the art of accompaniment':

Jesus' encounter with the two disciples of Emmaus is a fleeting one. But the entire destiny of the Church is contained within it. It tells us that the Christian community is not enclosed within a fortified citadel, but rather journeys along its most essential environment, which is the road. And there, it encounters people with their hopes and disappointments, burdensome at times. The Church listens to everyone's stories as they emerge from the treasure chest of personal conscience, in order to then offer the Word of Life, the witness of love, a love that is faithful until the end. And thus, the hearts of people reignite with hope.

(Pope Francis, General Audience, 24 May 2017)

For Pope Francis, there are several dimensions to this 'Art of Accompaniment.' First, accompaniment goes on inside the Church - it is something that we should already be doing with each other. How do we learn the ways of listening, reflecting and responding that we need if we are to walk alongside other people? We learn them from those Christians who have

accompanied us on our journey through life. Thus, Pope Francis writes:

Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow.

(Evangelii Gaudium, 172)

Second, the key skill for all accompaniment is the ability to listen attentively and openly to other people as they speak to us about their lives, their hopes and joys, their griefs and anxieties:

We need to practise the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives.

(Evangelii Gaudium, 171)

Third, accompaniment is the task of all members of the community. Pope Francis teaches:

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptised, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelisation, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients.

(Evangelii Gaudium, 120)

Finally, if we are to accompany people along the paths of this world, we cannot ignore the ecological challenges faced by our planet which impact both directly and indirectly on people's lives. This accompaniment begins with what Pope Francis calls 'an ecological conversion':

the ecological crisis is a summons to profound interior conversion. ... What all need is an "ecological conversion", whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.

(Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' on Care for our Common Home, 24 May 2015, no. 217)



Listening to the Synod

We, the people of the archdiocese, recommend that the pastoral plan heed the call of the Church to be courageous in guiding all Catholics to deepen their relationship with Jesus, and to engage in our mission to help make Jesus known and loved in our world.

Synod recommendation #1

During the Synod listening phase many people spoke about the need for the Church in the archdiocese to look out beyond its visible boundaries. One said, 'the Synod should discuss the world beyond the parish – don't make this all about keeping the parishes going. Put priests

and resources into ministries beyond that reach out to those on the margins of society and in the shadows of life.' Another person wrote in a way that strongly echoed the last quotation from Pope Francis:

The Catholic Church should be the gateway to Christ for the whole community not just a select few. It has a key role to play in Christ's mission to bring the good news of the resurrection to everyone. Particularly those on the edges of society who feel abandoned and alone. Its tradition has been to evolve to fulfil this mission in every age. In recent times the Church locally has been too fearful to meet this challenge, choosing instead to retreat within its walls and focus on its existing community. This has facilitated the decline we see in active members of our parish communities. It must move towards a growth strategy by taking new paths and creating new visions of what Church means today.

The importance of turning to the marginalised was reinforced again and again throughout the Synod process – to people who suffer from socio-economic deprivation, members of the LGBTQ+ community, asylum-seekers, the sick, the elderly, the housebound. The widespread desire to prioritise this outward perspective was sustained across all phases of the Synod and was reflected in Synod recommendation no. 1. This was the recommendation that received the strongest support at the Synod.



What we shall do

We will take up the idea of 'accompaniment' as the paradigm within which our archdiocese operates. We envision this as impacting on every aspect of our life - from school chaplaincy to clergy formation, from sacramental programmes to parish organisation, from care of the poor to outreach to the marginalised. We shall aim to walk alongside all people in the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of their lives. To do this we will:

- Seek to re-orientate our archdiocese to walk alongside the people of today, sharing with them the love that God has for each of us. This calls us to be willing to acknowledge the goodness in all people in all their diversity.
- Develop ways of accompanying each other as we deepen our relationship with Jesus.
- Explore ways to resource parishes to accompany parents as they bring up their children and hand on their faith to them. We will aim to help them recognise and celebrate the presence and action of Christ in their lives.
- Create a new vicariate to respond to the call of the Synod to place at the forefront of the life of the church: inclusivity, justice and peace, the poor and the environment.
- Recognise that Jesus commissioned his disciples to 'Go out into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation.' (Mk 16:15) If we are to accompany our brothers and sisters along a path that is blighted by humanity's misuse of creation and its resources, then we will need to regard concern for the environment as a core dimension of our evangelising mission in the world.
- Resource the exploration and embedding of the model of accompaniment.

Becoming a Church that accompanies people through life

Aims	Action	Timescale
<p>We will seek to re-orientate our archdiocese to walk alongside the people of today, sharing with them the love that God has for each of us.</p>	<p>We will set up an engagement strategy which will chart the path for the re-orientation of the archdiocese in the accompaniment model.</p> <p>We will help deaneries develop strategies for mission and outreach which will integrate accompaniment.</p>	<p>December 2021</p>
<p>We will develop ways of accompanying each other as we deepen our relationship with Jesus.</p>	<p>We will set up a 'spirituality round table' where representatives of various projects and spiritualities will work on a joined-up model of spiritual provision, formation and spiritual accompaniment across the archdiocese.</p>	<p>Lent 2022</p>
<p>We will explore ways to resource parishes to accompany parents as they bring up their children and hand on their faith to them. We will aim to help them recognise and celebrate the presence and action of Christ in their lives.</p>	<p>We will work with catechists and schools to develop a suitable accompaniment model for parents inclusive of, but not limited to, sacramental preparation.</p>	<p>Summer 2022</p>
<p>We will create a new vicariate to respond to the call of the Synod to place at the forefront of the life of the church: inclusivity, justice and peace, the poor, marginalised and the environment. We will recognise that concern for the environment is a core dimension of our evangelising mission in the world.</p>	<p>An episcopal vicar will be appointed.</p> <p>In partnership with Nugent, a full time post will be developed to enable this work.</p>	<p>January 2022</p> <p>Spring 2022</p>
<p>We will resource the exploration and embedding of the model of accompaniment.</p>	<p>We will appoint a member of the Pastoral Development Department to coordinate the introduction of the accompaniment model in partnership with The Proximity Project for embedding accompaniment. (Million Minutes, working with support from The Benedictines and Jesuits.)</p>	<p>2021</p>

2. Becoming a Church that honours the vocation of all the baptised

The Synod reflected on the lives of all the baptised and asked that we honour the many different ways in which they live out their vocations. This challenges us to be bold and creative in celebrating the call of Christ and in supporting people to respond.



Listening to the Scriptures

(1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10)

As you have come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.



What is particularly striking about these verses is the language used to describe the members of this Christian community. Three things stand out:

1. If we look for the temple where God can be found today, we will find that it is not built of stones, as the old temple in Jerusalem was. Instead, God's temple is now built from the lives, experiences, memories and faith of the Christian people: they are the 'living stones that are being built into a spiritual house.' Wherever the People of God are to be found, there God dwells; as the People of God open their lives to others, there and then God is present and active. As we journey through time, wherever we are the Kingdom of God is among us.
2. The author of the letter pours out a sequence of titles of great dignity to describe the Christian community: 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.' There is something almost breathless about this passage - as though the author is struggling to find words to describe just how valued every Christian is in the eyes of God and what an extraordinary thing is the community of believers.
3. The author is not afraid to use the language of sacrifice. The basic vocation of every Christian is to live a life of self-giving in union with Christ: as *Lumen Gentium* puts it, to be 'a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.' Therefore, the themes of honour and dignity that run through this passage imply a cost. The honour and dignity that the author is thinking about is that of men and women who in baptism have been plunged into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. In becoming like him, they, too, are willing to spend their lives daily in service of others.

Taken together, these three phrases of 1 Peter 2:4-10 point to the heart of our calling as Christians, of our 'vocation' - and in one sense it is the same for all, lay and ordained: all the baptised are called to offer to God as a 'living sacrifice' all that they can do in fulfilment of their own proper vocation. The parent who sacrifices their own sleep to calm their infant child; the adult who sits with their elderly mother or father hour after hour - even though their loved one no longer recognises them; the teacher or social worker who responds to a troubled teenager with patience and respect, even though they might want to scream with frustration; the neighbour who quietly brings practical help to a struggling family; the person who goes to work every day to support their family; and so on. God is there, God is active. Christians who do this might not be thinking in these terms, but in making these sacrifices day in and day out they are living priestly lives and responding to God's call. Good works and holy lives are the spiritual sacrifices that all Christians are called to offer to God, exercising their baptismal priesthood. Lay people should aim to fulfil their vocation just as truly as anyone called to the ordained priesthood or religious life, and it is essential that as we look to our future we should develop ways of supporting, recognising and celebrating the vocational presence of the laity in the world.



Listening to the teaching of the Church

Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among humanity, made the new people 'a kingdom and priests to God the Father.' The baptised, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian person they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. Therefore, all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God, should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.

(Lumen Gentium, 10)

This is one of the most striking sections of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. It comes from the opening section of the second chapter of the council's Dogmatic Constitution

on the Church. This chapter is entitled, 'On the People of God,' which is often understood as referring simply to the laity. However, the 'People of God' actually includes everybody in the Church - both lay and ordained. What is said in that chapter applies to everyone who has been baptised. The chapter draws deeply on 1 Peter 2: 4-5,9-10:

The Second Vatican Council taught us that all Christians have a baptismal priesthood. Together they form a priestly people. It also taught that within the priestly people, some are called to exercise the ordained or ministerial priesthood for the benefit of their brothers and sisters. This is a priesthood of a different kind or 'essence'. Ordained bishops and priests make Christ himself present to his priestly people: 'The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people.' (Lumen Gentium, 10) Vatican II stressed that the baptismal/common and ordained/ministerial priesthoods are 'nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ.' (ibid.) St John Paul II explored the complementarity of the two forms of participating in Christ's priesthood when he wrote:

The ministerial priesthood, as the Second Vatican Council recalls, essentially has the royal priesthood of all the faithful as its aim and is ordered to it. For this reason, so as to assure and to increase communion in the Church, particularly in those places where there is a diversity and complementarity of ministries, pastors must always acknowledge that their ministry is fundamentally ordered to the service of the entire People of God (cf. Heb 5:1). The lay faithful, in turn, must acknowledge that the ministerial priesthood is totally necessary for their participation in the mission in the Church.

Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici on The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, no. 23.

For more than forty years we have also had in our archdiocese the permanent diaconate, restored by Pope Paul VI after Vatican II. The deacon, in the midst of the Christian community, points towards Christ as the one who serves and at the same time he is an instrument by which Christ the servant becomes active, present and accessible to the community. Thus, the deacon is 'the living icon of Christ the servant in the Church.'³³

The deacon is not the parish priest's 'second-in-command', nor does he take over the ministries of the laity. He represents Christ the servant in the places and situations where the Church meets people in the realities of their lives. Most deacons are called to do this in parish ministry, in their places of work and in their family life, but others also have chaplaincy or archdiocesan roles.

[The deacon's work is] alleviating suffering and hardships so that the needy can feel the love of the Lord, hear the Gospel and respond to it (see Acts 6:1-6); being alongside people at work, sharing their troubles and dreams, helping them to see all of those matter to the Lord who came to save us and that nothing is beyond the scope of his mercy; keeping the Church's leaders and members aware of the marginalized and the abandoned, and seeking in every way to facilitate contact and care.³⁴

Wherever he ministers, the deacon is engaged in the world and in the Church, animates the Church's outreach to those on the margins, helps people to see that all of their lives are spiritual sacrifices to God and, through his actions in the liturgy, proclaims the Good News, makes known the needs of the community, receives and prepares the gifts of the people, and sends the congregation out to continue consecrating the world to God.



Listening to the Synod

We, the people of the archdiocese, recommend that the pastoral plan must include honouring the many vocations of all the baptised, women and men alike. This will also include a strong commitment to lay ministry including training employed ministers, supporting volunteer ministers, and coordinating their work alongside the clergy.

(Synod recommendation #2)

A theme that emerged constantly during the listening phase was the need to recognise the significant role that lay people play in the Church and in the world. One person looked at the Church around them, and saw, 'people with gifts and ideas and abilities looking towards each other to bring changes in line with the love and the gifts in us from our creator.' They said that everyone had 'a ministry and capabilities and ability to grow, develop and encouraging others.' Such ministerial capacity, however, needs to be recognised, as another person asked:

How can the laity be given recognition for bearing witness to their faith in their everyday family living, with friends, in work and in encounters with the public? How can the community of the Church give recognition to the laity for the good lives they lead?

There was a concern, too that lay ministries should be acknowledged and supported across the archdiocese. One person asked that we should, 'ensure that the archdiocese really has a shared vision emphasising the importance of collaborative and lay ministry. Despite Vatican II, this isn't always the case'. Members of a listening group offered a practical suggestion, linking the development of a collaborative approach to the provision of adequate formation to the clergy:

We thought that collaborative ministry would work best if the archdiocese developed guidelines and provided training on it for its priests and if it was made the preferred working practice for parishes across the archdiocese with accountability a priority.

A thread that ran through many responses on this theme was the need to recognise the contribution of women to the life of the Church. One person spoke for many when they wrote, 'the most important topic for the Church today is the role and greater inclusion of women. Young people especially need to feel that the Church is more inclusive and not so male dominated.'

In the analysis of the proposals phase of the Synod preparation, these ideas found their way into recommendation #2, which received the second-highest number of positive votes from delegates. The set of recommendations placed before Synod in June 2021 contained a parallel recommendation (#3) that related to the formation of priests, deacons and seminarians. This recommendation was also well-supported. Initially, the pastoral plan drafting team considered dealing with the support and training of lay people and of the clergy as two separate post-Synod actions. However, they found themselves asking whether to do so would be an authentically synodal way forward. The contents of recommendation #3, therefore, have been distributed between two separate areas of action. The dimension of clergy training and in-service formation is treated in this area of development; the pastoral care of priests and the fostering of their spiritual life are considered under the sixth action area.

The focus of this area of development is the support and strengthening of the baptismal priesthood in all its breadth, closely bearing in mind both the essential differences between and the co-relatedness of the ordained and baptismal priesthoods. This will allow us to create genuinely collaborative patterns of ministry. Most importantly, it keeps before our eyes the challenge of bringing to reality in our archdiocese the Church's vision that the celebration of the Eucharist should be the source and summit of every dimension of the life of the Church. That can only be possible if the one who gathers the faithful around the tables of the Word

and Sacrament and the ones who take Christ into the world share a common vision, a common sense of the mission, and a profound mutual appreciation and respect.



What we shall do

We shall be bold and creative in celebrating the call of Christ and in supporting people to respond. Mindful of the changing needs of the local Church, we recognise the need to foster the gifts and callings of all the baptised, and to new models of leadership that engage directly with the realities of life today, building up collaboration and embed synodality. In order to do this, we will:

- Encourage the understanding that all the baptised share in the priesthood of Christ and that the ordained ministry exists to serve the priestly people of God, enabling the gifts of all to flourish.
- Implement the extension of the instituted ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist to lay leaders, exploring the ways in which these most effectively can be deployed in our changing archdiocesan realities alongside the many other forms of lay ministry, eg chaplaincy, bereavement and funeral ministry, ministry with families, the sick and housebound, the ministry of charity, etc.
- Maximise the possibilities open to us for collaboration in the initial formation of priests, deacons and lay ministers. As a first step we will set up a foundation year for all ministries (lay and ordained). This will replace the current propaedeutic years for deacons and priests and establish a paradigm for joint formation and in-service.
- Develop formal processes for ongoing formation for all in ministry and leadership positions (priests, deacons and laity).
- Build on the findings of the Ministry Research Project being conducted by Liverpool Hope University into diaconal and lay ministry to ensure that the learning is reflected in new structures, by looking to implement the recommendations of the Ministry Research Project for the formation and support of deacons and lay ministers.
- Establish a new post within the Pastoral Development Department to co-ordinate formation.

Becoming a Church that honours the vocation of all the baptised

Aims	Action	Timescale
<p>We will encourage the understanding that all the baptised share in the priesthood of Christ and that the ordained ministry exists to serve the priestly people of God, enabling the gifts of all to flourish.</p>	<p>The actions for this aim are yet to be articulated.</p>	
<p>We will implement the extension of the instituted ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist to lay leaders, exploring the ways in which these most effectively can be deployed in our changing archdiocesan realities alongside the many other forms of lay ministry, e.g. chaplaincy, bereavement and funeral ministry, ministry with families, the sick and housebound, the ministry of charity, etc.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will research the ways in which the universal Church intends these ministries to be established and the ways in which local churches have begun to establish them. 2. We will propose a costed and resourced programme for discernment, recruitment, initial formation, commissioning, deployment and ongoing support for those receiving these ministries. 3. We will begin to roll out the programme. 	<p>July 2022</p> <p>October 2022</p> <p>September 2023</p>
<p>We will maximise the possibilities open to us for collaboration in the initial formation of priests, deacons and lay ministers.</p>	<p>As a first step we will set up a foundation year for all ministries (lay and ordained). We will look at the current propaedeutic years for deacons and priests and establish a paradigm for joint formation and in-service.</p>	<p>Initial exploration in 2022</p> <p>New propaedeutic year 2023</p>
<p>We will develop formal processes for ongoing formation for all in ministry and leadership positions (priests, deacons and laity).</p>	<p>The actions for this aim are yet to be articulated.</p>	
<p>We will build on the findings of the Ministry Research Project being conducted by Liverpool Hope University into diaconal and lay ministry to ensure that the learning is reflected in new structures.</p>	<p>We will look to implement the recommendations of the Ministry Research Project for the formation and support of deacons and lay ministers.</p>	<p>The project will complete its final report in July 2022 and produce a tool kit to assist in implementing its recommendations</p>
	<p>We will establish a new post within the Pastoral Development Department to co-ordinate formation.</p>	<p>Spring 2022</p>

3. Becoming a Church where synodality is embedded

Our Synod has taught us the importance of carefully listening together to what God is saying to us as we plan for the future of our archdiocese. It is important, however, that we continue to walk the same path – and that we carry forward the approaches to working together along our Synod journey into the future. In other words, synodality cannot be a ‘one-off’ experience – instead, we face the challenge of embedding a synodal approach into every aspect of our life as an archdiocese.

Listening to the Scriptures

(1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27)

Just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.



The New Testament contains two letters that St Paul wrote to the Christian community in the Greek city of Corinth. From outside the Corinthians probably seemed to have a very vibrant Church, but at heart it was bitterly divided – socially, economically, and doctrinally. The two letters track Paul's attempts to get the Christians there to pull together, and to focus on their unity. To help them to grasp what was needed St Paul told them that the Church was like a body. A body is made up of many different members (arms, legs, eyes and so on) and yet all the body's different parts need to work together for the body to flourish. Each part of the body needs to be part of the whole body and it cannot exist without the whole. St Paul told the divided community in Corinth that it is exactly the same for the Church.

Of course, comparing the community to a human body begs a question: who is the head? There probably would have been several people in Corinth who thought that they were perfectly suited to that job. But St Paul does not allow them to go down that road. The head of this particular body is Christ: the Church is his body. It is impossible to be a Christian without being a member of that body, and no member of that body is more or less significant than any other: 'If one member suffers,' St Paul wrote, 'all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together (1 Cor 12:26).

We are not joined to each in the body of Christ other because we look alike, or like each other, or even because we share the same views. We are each united to the whole because we have been plunged into the waters of baptism; there the Spirit joined us to Christ and with him to all other members of his body. The Church, therefore, is not simply an organisation or a human association. Its members are not 'affiliated' to each other in the same way that people are in clubs, or unions, or political parties. Instead, it is built on something deeper – the profound 'communion' that the Holy Spirit creates between Christ and each of its members, and that they therefore have with each other.

In the very early weeks of his pontificate, Pope Francis turned to this passage of Scripture at his weekly general audiences. He made two points. The first was a call to the whole Church to remain close to Christ, its head:

If the head is separated from the rest of the body, the whole person cannot survive. So it is in the Church, we must remain bound ever more deeply to Jesus. But not only that: just as the body needs the lifeblood to keep it alive, so we must allow Jesus to work in us, that His Word guide us, that His presence in the Eucharist nourish us, animate us, that His love gives strength to our love of neighbour.

(General Audience, 19 June, 2013)

Here Pope Francis drew together two themes that have run right through our pastoral plan: when we draw close to Jesus it is not only for our personal spiritual benefit but so that we can help to carry forward the mission of the Church – as he says here, '[Jesus'] love gives strength to our love of neighbour.' Second, when Pope Francis said that the Eucharist 'animates' us he was tapping into a very deep tradition of the Church: as we eat and drink Holy Communion, we not only receive the body and blood of the Lord, but we are drawn ever more closely into his body of the Church: St Augustine reminds us that the Eucharist is totally different to any other food. Everything else that we eat becomes part of our bodies. In the Eucharist, we become what we eat - as we receive the body and blood of Christ sacramentally, we are drawn more closely into the body of Christ which is the Church. Receiving Holy Communion, therefore, not only draws us closer to Christ, not only strengthens our union with each other, but also drives the members of the Church forward to mission.

This leads us to Pope Francis' second point, where he asks what the Holy Spirit is doing within the Body of Christ:

St Paul says that as members of the human body, although different and many, we form one body, as we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-13). In the Church, therefore, there is a variety, a diversity of tasks and functions, there is no dull uniformity, but the richness of the gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes. But there is communion and unity: we are all in a relation to each other and we all come together to form one living body, deeply connected to Christ.

It is this deep connection between the members of the body of Christ that underpins the importance of synodality in the Church. We need to listen attentively to what the Holy Spirit is doing as it distributes gifts among the members of the body. Those gifts are always given for the good and mission of the whole Church and are not just for the individual Christian – so we need to give time to listening carefully to where the Holy Spirit is leading us and together seek to understand why. As the members of the Church take the gifts of the Spirit out into the world, we need to hear what they encounter there – what hopes and joys, what concerns and anxieties do they find in the lives of men and women? How has the Spirit led them to respond? How can the whole body help them better to hear and meet those needs? Unless the Church is constantly listening to what God is doing in the lives of its members, then its grasp of its mission will be blunted, and it will never have a true sense of the gifts that the Holy Spirit is lavishing upon it and be able to discern the purpose for which those gifts have been given.



Listening to the teaching of the Church

In order to walk together, the Church today needs a conversion to the synodal experience. It needs to strengthen a culture of dialogue, reciprocal listening, spiritual discernment, consensus and communion in order to find areas and ways of joint decision-making and to respond to pastoral challenges. In this way, co-responsibility in the life of the Church will be fostered in a spirit of service. It is urgent to go forward to make proposals and take on responsibilities to overcome clericalism and arbitrary impositions. Synodality is a constitutive dimension of the Church. We cannot be Church without recognising a real practice of the *sensus fidei* of all the People of God.

Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for the Amazon Region 2019, Final Document, 'The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology', no. 88

Cardinal Grech reminded our Synod what synodality authentically means:

Your experience shows that a vote can only take place at the end of a long process of listening and discernment: a listening to the Spirit, who speaks through all the members of the People of God, and a shared discernment of His will for the Church. In fact, as the Holy Father says, every Synod must take place “under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, [...] under his light, his guidance and his irruption, in order to learn to listen and discern the ever-new horizon that he wants to give us. Because synodality presupposes and requires the irruption of the Holy Spirit” (Letter to the People of God on the Way in Germany, 29 June 2019). I am convinced that during this synodal experience you have learnt that although you were asked to take a “vote”, the synod is neither a parliament nor a convention, but, as Pope Francis insists, it is “an expression of the Church. It is a Church that walks together and reads reality with the eyes of faith and the heart of God”. One of the values of a synodal pedagogy is the ability to abandon this parliamentary logic and “learn to listen, in community, to what the Spirit says to the Church”. In other words, the conclusions of a Synod are not an expression of the vote of the majority but an agreement in the faith of the Church.

The final point is important and takes us to the quotation from the 2019 Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the head of this section. We read there that ‘We cannot be Church without recognising a real practice of the *sensus fidei* of all the People of God.’ The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that, ‘all the faithful share in understanding and handing on

the revealed truth. They have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who instructs them and guides them into all truth' (no. 91). The whole People of God – bishops, clergy, laity together - has a 'supernatural appreciation of faith' (sensus fidei); when they 'manifest a universal consent in matters of the faith and morals (no. 92).' Synodality, therefore, is an ongoing process of carefully listening together to what the Spirit is saying to the Church. This is not so that we can 'change' our doctrine by a 'democratic' vote, but so that we hear how the truths that have been revealed and handed on to us can speak most effectively to the world in which we live and in the lives of those whom we serve.

The Synod of Bishops spelled out just how vital this process of mutual listening is in the life and mission of the Church:

Synodality is the way of being of the early Church (cf. Acts 15) and it must be ours. "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ" (1 Co 12:12). Synodality also characterises the Church of the Second Vatican Council, understood as the People of God in their equality and common dignity with regard to the diversity of ministries, charisms and services. "Synodality is the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelising mission" that is to say, in "the involvement and participation of the whole People of God in the life and mission of the Church."

The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology, no 89

More recently, the Vatican's preparatory document for the world-wide 2023 Synod has stressed the importance of including an ecumenical dimension into our understanding of synodality. This does not mean that we follow the Church Governance models of others – the role played in the life of the Church of England by diocesan synods and General Synod is very different to the Catholic understanding of how synodality operates. However, the Vatican is keen to stress that we journey together with our ecumenical partners:

The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey. What relations do we have with the brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations? What areas do they concern? What fruits have we drawn from this "journeying together"? What are the difficulties?

We have a particularly rich legacy of ecumenical engagement here in the archdiocese and we were accompanied along the path to our Synod by brothers and sisters from various Christian traditions. As we look to the future, it will be important to build on these foundations.



Listening to the Synod

We, the people of the archdiocese, recommend that the pastoral plan include a strengthening of collaborative and synodal leadership at local and diocesan level with a sustained commitment to accountability, transparency, and inclusivity.

Recommendation #16a

There was a clear call from the listening process that the synodal experience should be carried forward and supported by new structures within the archdiocese. One person suggested that there was a need for 'mandatory ongoing structures within the Church for listening/consultation about all matters affecting the faithful (at every level)'. Another person suggested a possible mechanism for making this real:

'The creation of a pastoral council as a follow up to the Synod. Drawing say about 150 members perhaps one priest and three laity per pastoral area [deanery] plus episcopal vicars etc, the bishops, chairs of key committees, elected deacons and religious, expert members and ecumenical observers.'

The importance of developing a long-term approach was underlined by a listening group of men and women belonging to religious congregations, who told the listening phase:

The propositions of the Synod cannot possibly 'resolve' things. We need long term attractive ways to help people know God, know the Word of God, understand the joy of the Christian life, understand over time the purpose of being a member of the Church, understand the Holy Spirit etc. in practical ways, understand what people already know within - life is worth living if we focus on others and not on self - learning how to love.'



What we shall do

Having journeyed together on Synod 2020 and heeding the call of Pope Francis that the synodal model is the way of the Church in its third millennium, we will:

- Create a new advisory body that will replace the Archbishop's Council as the consultative body that meets regularly with the Archbishop. Its membership will include laymen and women, as well as clergy.
- Create an archdiocesan synodal council which will also be given the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the pastoral plan.
- Clarify the relationship between the various bodies that underpin synodality (e.g. Trustees, Synodal Council, Archbishop's Council [or successor], Council of Priests, etc.) and inculcate ways of working in each that support synodality.
- Implement synodal ways of working at all levels of the archdiocesan support services.
- Be alert to ways in which we can do some things 'better together' ecumenically.

**Becoming
a Church
where
synodality is
embedded**

Aims	Action	Timescale
	We will complete the work of compiling the governance manual that clarifies the relationship between the various archdiocesan consultative bodies and the various vicariates/departments of the curia.	January/February 2022
	Revision of the constitution of the Council of Priests in the light of the creation of new deaneries.	February 2022
We will clarify the relationship between the various archdiocesan consultative bodies that underpin synodality and inculcate ways of working in each that support synodality.	A review of the statutes of the Chapter of Canons which will include constituting it as the College of Consultors.	Easter 2022
	We will create a new advisory body that will replace the Archbishop's Council as the consultative body that meets regularly with the Archbishop. Its membership will include laymen and women, as well as clergy.	Easter 2022
	We will create a dedicated forum for the permanent deacons of the archdiocese, akin to the Council of Priests, with the possibility of it being formally constituted.	Summer 2022 Potential 1st meeting Autumn 2022
	We will create a steering committee for the archdiocesan synodal council.	September 2022
	We will create an archdiocesan synodal council which will also be given the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the pastoral plan.	Jan 2023 1st meeting of Archdiocesan Synodal Council
We will implement synodal ways of working at all levels of archdiocesan support services.	This will involve the ongoing oversight of the moderator of the curia and the chief operating officer.	January 2022 and ongoing
We will be alert to ways in which we can do some things 'better together' ecumenically.	We will continue to make full use of the Dialogue & Unity Commission, as well as our well-established ecumenical links both at regional and local level.	Ongoing
	Deanery Synodal Councils will explore ecumenical possibilities at the local level and invite ecumenical observers to some of their gatherings.	May 2022 onwards
	We will invite ecumenical observers to participate in meetings of the Archdiocesan Synodal Council.	January 2023 onwards

4. Becoming a Church that renews its organisational structures and administers its property to serve its mission

Reflecting on the rapidly changing situation on the ground across the archdiocese, the Synod called us to be bold and creative in developing new models of leadership to attend to the changing needs of our time and to assure good pastoral care into the future. Looking at questions of local organisation necessarily takes us to the question of property. We have also been gifted with a wonderful legacy of over 1,000 properties and landholdings. The Synod asked us to reflect on how these are helping us to fulfil our task as the Church today. Therefore, in order to be both bold and creative in how we honour this legacy whilst also attending to changing needs, we will set in place a process of local and diocesan discernment of how best to use our resources.



Listening to the Scriptures

(2 Cor 9:6-7)

The point is this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as they have decided in their heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.



A rarely mentioned fact is that during his third missionary journey St Paul was collecting money: as much as he could possibly get. This was not money for his own use – it didn't go towards his 'salary', or pay his travel expenses or meet his accommodation costs. Instead, he was taking every last coin with him back to Jerusalem at the end of his missionary journey. There it would be used to support the poor members of the Christian community. Paul's collection, then, was a very practical way in which one part of the Church was being asked to help another part.

To our modern eyes there is nothing terribly surprising about that, but in the politics of the early Church it was revolutionary. The new communities that Paul founded in modern-day Turkey and Greece included many people who were not Jewish by birth. They came from cultural and religious backgrounds very different from those of the original Christian community in Jerusalem, and we know that some of the Christians in Jerusalem looked at St Paul and his strange new converts with suspicion and even hostility. St Paul knew exactly what he was doing – the collection was not only a work of real practical help, but it also helped to reassure the Jerusalem Christians that the new converts from paganism really were their brothers and sisters. But Paul's collection also sent out a broader message: it was a visible sign of the loving unity that the Church needs to show to if the world is to accept its message.

Mutual support and generosity should be hallmarks of the Christian community; we strengthen each other so that together we can turn towards the world to make Christ's love present there. Unfortunately, all too easily local Christian communities can become absorbed with themselves and their own concerns, which blunts the mission of the Church. As we look to how the archdiocese fulfils its mission today, there are two vitally important lessons from St Paul that we need to take forward. First, different parish communities need each other. It is no longer possible to imagine that any one parish could have all the resources in terms of people, skills, plant or money that are necessary for taking our mission forward in any meaningful way. We are, therefore, going to have to reorganise our structures on the ground to help parishes to work much more closely and effectively together. This calls for a generous sharing of resources and people between parishes and a willingness on the part of all to work together. The second lesson is that St Paul was not afraid of using money in the service of the mission of the Church, especially to the poor. As we look at the property holdings of the archdiocese, we ask how we might make better use of them to serve the mission of the Church here.



Listening to the teaching of the Church

The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelises, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be "the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters." This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.

(Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 28)

Pope Francis highlights here the considerable potential for our parishes and a number of things that must be done urgently if the parish system is to continue to serve the mission of the Church. Its strengths lie first and foremost in its immersion in the life of a local area and in the potential for flexibility and change in the way it goes about its mission. Its potential weaknesses arise if it becomes inwardly focussed and loses a sense of mission to the world beyond its own concerns.

These concerns were taken up and expanded upon in 2020 by the Vatican's Congregation for Clergy when it published the Instruction, 'The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church.' This Instruction contains the stark warning that 'the current model [of parish] no longer adequately corresponds to the many expectations of the faithful, especially when one considers the multiplicity of community types in existence today' (no. 16) The Instruction reminds us that we can no longer think of the parish as simply a self-contained geographical territory in which the patterns of life go on in a stable and unchanging manner. Our lives interact with many different communities – face-to-face, online, in the workplace, with our peer-groups (especially important for young people). The lives of the inhabitants of a parish stretch out widely beyond its geographical boundaries and its own internal structures of parish, school, and institutional roles. Each parish needs to acknowledge that it is a complex context in which 'people express their lives in terms of relationships, reciprocal service and ancient traditions' (ibid). The response proposed is that parishes should – as Pope Francis said – become mission orientated and review their pastoral approach in the light of the call to be a Church of accompaniment:

The parish community is called truly to master the "art of accompaniment". If deep roots are planted, the parish will become a place where solitude is overcome, which has affected so many lives, as well as being "a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey and a centre of constant missionary outreach" (no. 26).

At the same time, the Instruction warns that if we do not take adequate account of this dynamic context, then we are condemned to failure:

Any pastoral action that is limited to the territory of the parish is outdated, which is something the parishioners themselves observe when their parish appears to be more interested in preserving a nostalgia of former times as opposed to looking to the future with courage. Moreover, mere repetitive action that fails to have an impact upon people's concrete lives remains a sterile attempt at survival, which is usually welcomed by general indifference. If the parish does not exude that spiritual dynamic of evangelisation, it runs the risk of becoming self-referential and fossilised, offering experiences that are devoid of evangelical flavour and missionary drive, of interest only to small groups. (16-17)

What is needed is 'the conversion of structures,' which in turn calls for 'a significant change in mentality and an interior renewal' (no. 35). Any reorganisation at ground level calls for support and formation of those entrusted with pastoral leadership. So the implementation of this area of development must be closely co-ordinated with areas two, three and six of this pastoral plan which engage with formation for all the baptised and the care of priests.



Listening to the Synod

We, the people of the archdiocese, recommend that the pastoral plan be bold and creative in renewing parish and deanery structures. We want our structures to be at the service of our mission, and we are aware that we must adapt parish structures to meet the needs of our age and plan to share resources across parish boundaries.

Synod recommendation #18

We, the people of the archdiocese, recommend that the pastoral plan develop strategies to accompany communities as they discern the future use of properties.

Synod recommendation #17b

All along the Synod journey people asked whether the current parish and deanery structure was truly effective. During the listening phase one person suggested that the Synod should initiate, 'a rethink of the concept of parish'. They added, 'I am not suggesting anything other than a move away from a rigidity which creates a barrier to community and cooperation. I will leave it to others to explore the possibilities!' Others stressed the need for the Church to be relevant to local communities, stressing 'one size does not fit all.' All this was accompanied by a call for transparency – one person asked for the Synod to discuss 'mandatory ongoing structures within the Church for listening/consultation about all matters affecting the faithful (at every level).'

Alongside calls for structural review, people repeatedly raised the question of the use and management of the archdiocese's property holdings. The listening phase brought a call for a 'full and honest appraisal of the physical structures that we have so that we have only what we need, and the surplus is no longer a barrier to evangelisation.' Another person spelled out what this might mean in practice:

We have too many churches and not enough priests, we should close some and bring the smaller congregations together to give a more meaningful sense of community, sell off the crumbling churches and use the money to update the churches that are left, many of which don't meet the disability access standards with no disabled toilet, no ramps, no signage for people with learning disabilities.

The listening process also raised an awareness that a careful review of the archdiocese's property holdings could lead to the release of equity. That, in turn, might be used to support the Church's mission, not least to the poorest in society.



What we shall do

In practical terms, recent Church teaching calls us to renew the way our parishes work together to serve the mission of the Church. The 2020 Instruction of the Congregation of Clergy points us in the direction that we will take. The Instruction advises that when circumstances require it, the Bishop can set up 'a more stable and institutional grouping of various parishes within the vicariate forane [in our terms, the Deanery] in order to foster greater collaboration among them' (no. 54). This is an invitation to develop and expand upon the models of parish collaboration that we have already developed in the archdiocese. We shall take up this invitation and create what we will call 'families of parishes.' A family of parishes is a grouping of three or more parishes that collaborate in deeper and more intentional ways than parishes have ever done before. Each parish in a family would retain its own unique identity – in the same way that brothers and sisters in a family each have their unique role and identity. This is not a parish cluster or merger as we have done in the past. Instead, these new families of parishes would collaborate by sharing resources — including priests, deacons, and staff across parish boundaries — to support and resource each other to advance the mission Christ has entrusted to his Church.

Every parish will participate in this renewed structure. Each parish – like each member of our Church – has gifts which contribute to the full flourishing of our archdiocese as it seeks to fulfil its mission in the world. For many of our parishes this will be an entirely new process which will require everyone to let go of a status quo mentality and to choose trust over fear. For all of us, this new reality will require a renewal of our confidence in Jesus' power and his presence among us.

Therefore, reflecting on the rapidly changing situation on the ground across the archdiocese, the Synod called us to be bold and creative in developing new structures and models of leadership to attend to the changing needs of our time and to assure good pastoral care into the future. Therefore, we will:

- Implement the new deanery structures.
- Constitute in each deanery a Deanery Synodal Council (DSC), chaired by a lay person appointed by the Archbishop.
- Provide formation to deans, chairs and members of Deanery Synodal Councils.
- Require the Deanery Synodal Councils to explore local need and resources that will lead to the establishment of families of parishes.
- Support the Deanery Synodal Councils to explore different ways of parish leadership boldly and creatively, which might be by priests, deacons or lay men and women.
- Carry out a comprehensive audit of archdiocesan property and land.
- Use the information gathered by the audit to equip the families of parishes to look creatively at their building needs and whether the possible release of funds from the sale of property that is no longer required could be used to secure the future mission of the Church and to explore ways of property becoming more environmentally sustainable.

Aims	Action	Timescale
	We will implement the new deanery structures.	Advent 2021
	We will constitute in each deanery a Deanery Synodal Council (DSC), chaired by a lay person.	May 2022
	Deanery Synod Council Chairs to be appointed by the Archbishop.	March 2022
	We will provide formation to deans, chairs of Deanery Synodal Councils.	April 2022
	We will provide formation to members of Deanery Synodal Councils.	May 2022 onwards
	We will provide ongoing support/ accompaniment mechanism/forums for lay chairs and deans.	May 2022 onwards
Becoming a Church that renews its organisational structures and administers its property to serve its mission	We will enable the organisational structures of the archdiocese to become more synodal and missionary.	Toolkit to explore local needs piloted from September 2022 Establishment of families of parishes to commence by 1 March 2023
	We will support the Deanery Synodal Councils to explore different ways of parish leadership boldly and creatively, which might be by priests, deacons or lay men and women.	Rolling programme from March 2023
	We will carry out a comprehensive audit of archdiocesan property and land.	Concluded by March 2023
	We will use the information gathered by the audit to equip the families of parishes to look creatively at their building needs and - whether the possible release of funds from the sale of property that is no longer required could be used to secure the future mission of the Church - to explore ways of property becoming more environmentally sustainable	April 2023 onwards

5. Becoming a Church where young people and young adults flourish

In order to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with young people as they experience the joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties of growing and maturing, the Synod recognised the importance of approaching them with authenticity, offering opportunities for community and sharing with them experiences of transcendence.



Listening to the Scriptures

(John 6:2-3,5,7-11)

A large crowd was following Jesus because they saw the signs that he was doing to the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain and there he sat down with his disciples. Lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a large crowd was coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where can we buy bread so that these people may eat?' Philip answered him, 'Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what is that for so many?' Jesus said, 'Have the people sit down,' for there was much grass in that place. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.



Every so often in the Gospels a character pops up out of nowhere, plays a role in some significant event, and then is never heard of again. The boy in this Gospel passage is exactly one such character. All four Gospels tell us about the feeding of the 5,000 – but this boy only appears in John’s version of the story. We don’t know his name. We don’t know what happened to him afterwards. The only thing that we can tell about him from the story is that he came from a poor family. His lunch tells us that. Wheat flour was expensive; only people with money ate bread that had been baked from it. The bread that the boy brings to Jesus, on the other hand, was made from ground barley which was used to make cheap and rough bread for the poor. The food of the poor, brought forward by the young. Older people might have been too ashamed to step forward with it.

These details are not to be found in the other three Gospels which were probably written before John’s. In the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke the apostles either produce the bread and fish upfront or rummage around until they find something edible. In either case, what they bring to Jesus are loaves of unspecified variety. By adding the detail of barley, the author of John’s Gospel is probably inviting us to draw a link between Jesus and the Old Testament prophet Elijah, who miraculously produced loaves to feed a hundred people from a few sacks of barley flour. But the introduction of these details allows us to catch a glimpse of the ministry of a young person in the life of Jesus. It is Jesus who ministers to the 5,000, but he is assisted by the generosity of this boy.

We very easily fall into the trap of thinking about the Church’s ministry to young people; this story invites us to turn that around. Young people can have a ministry to the Church. Like the boy on the mountain top they have gifts to bring, gifts that are badly needed. For example, the Synod listening phase brought to light the extent to which the Church has been wounded by sin, carelessness and the abuse of power. Many people spoke particularly about the scandal of the sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy and religious. For Pope Francis a key antidote to these sins of the elders is the holiness of the young:

Through the holiness of the young, the Church can renew her spiritual ardour and her apostolic vigour. The balm of holiness generated by the good lives of so many young people can heal the wounds of the Church and of the world, bringing us back to that fullness of love to which we have always been called: young saints inspire us to return to our first love (cf. Rev 2:4)."

(Post-Synodal Exhortation Christus Vivit to Young People and to the Entire People of God, 50)

For Pope Francis, young people can call the Church out of the tiredness that we so often seem to experience as a Church because, ‘true youth means having a heart capable of loving, whereas everything that separates us from others make the heart grow old.’ In their vitality and creativity young people not only challenge, but impact upon the life of the Church:

Christ’s Church can always yield to the temptation to lose enthusiasm because she no longer hears the Lord calling her to take the risk of faith, to give her all without counting the dangers; she can be tempted to revert to seeking a false, worldly form of security. Young people can help keep her young. They can stop her from becoming corrupt; they can keep her moving forward, prevent her from being proud and sectarian, help her to be poorer and to bear better witness, to take the side of the poor and the outcast, to fight for justice and humbly to let herself be challenged. Young people can offer the Church the beauty of youth by renewing her ability to “rejoice with new beginnings, to give unreservedly of herself, to be renewed and to set out for ever greater accomplishments”.

(Christus Vivit, 37)

Therefore, Pope Francis urged young people to live their youth to the full:

Dear young people, make the most of these years of your youth. Don't observe life from a balcony. Don't confuse happiness with an armchair, or live your life behind a screen. Whatever you do, do not become the sorry sight of an abandoned vehicle! Don't be parked cars, but dream freely and make good decisions. Take risks, even if it means making mistakes. Don't go through life anaesthetised or approach the world like tourists. Make a ruckus! Cast out the fears that paralyze you, so that you don't become young mummies. Live! Give yourselves over to the best of life! Open the door of the cage, go out and fly! Please, don't take early retirement.

(Christus Vivit, 13, 12, 17-18 and 143)

The challenge addressed to us as an archdiocese is twofold. First, how do we minister to young people by walking alongside them as they explore the questions and possibilities that face them? But secondly, how do we receive and welcome the ministry of young people to the Church? How willing are we to receive the gift of their 'barley loaves and fishes' to the archdiocese today?



Listening to the teaching of the Church

The community has an important role in the accompaniment of young people; it should feel collectively responsible for accepting, motivating, encouraging and challenging them. All should regard young people with understanding, appreciation and affection, and avoid constantly judging them or demanding of them a perfection beyond their years.

Pope Francis, Christus Vivit, 243

In his own exhortation to young people, *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis has outlined some of the answers to these questions. Of course, he frames those answers in terms of 'accompaniment' – which points to our own way forward in the archdiocese. We do have an urgent desire to share with our young people the treasury of the scriptures, of our tradition and of the teaching of the Church. However, before we can do that we must become attentive to the questions and issues that they are engaging with, struggling with, being creative with. So, Pope Francis wrote:

The Synod recognised that the members of the Church do not always take the approach of Jesus. Rather than listening to young people attentively, "all too often, there is a tendency to provide pre-packaged answers and ready-made solutions, without allowing their real questions to emerge and facing the challenges they pose". Yet once the Church sets aside narrow preconceptions and listens carefully to the young, this empathy enriches her, for "it allows young people to make their own contribution to the community, helping it to appreciate new sensitivities and to consider new questions".

(Christus Vivit, 65)

The attitude that must underpin all our engagement with young people has to be one of respect: 'each young person's heart should thus be considered "holy ground", a bearer of seeds of divine life, before which we must "take off our shoes" in order to draw near and enter more deeply into the Mystery.' (no. 67) In accompanying young people, we are called to 'discern pathways where others only see walls, to recognise potential where others only see peril.' (ibid) Pope Francis quoted the description that young people themselves gave of the kind of people who best walk alongside them as mentors:

The qualities of such a mentor include: being a faithful Christian who engages with the Church and the world; someone who constantly seeks holiness; someone who is a confidant without judging. Similarly, someone who actively listens to the needs of young people and responds in kind; someone deeply loving and self-aware; someone who recognises his or her limits and knows the joys and sorrows of the spiritual journey. An especially important quality in mentors is the acknowledgement of their own humanity – the fact that they are human beings who make mistakes: not perfect people but forgiven sinners. ... Mentors should not lead young people as passive followers, but walk alongside them, allowing them to be active participants in the journey. They should respect the freedom that comes with a young person's process of discernment and equip them with tools to do so well. A mentor should believe wholeheartedly in a young person's ability to participate in the life of the Church. A mentor should therefore nurture the seeds of faith in young people, without expecting to immediately see the fruits of the work of the Holy Spirit. (no. 246)

Fostering the vocation of such mentors will be a key dimension of our pastoral planning for ministry to and with young people in the archdiocese. As Pope Francis tells us, this role cannot be limited to priests and religious, but the laity should be 'empowered' to take it on, supported by initial and on-going formation. However, it is also crucial that we remember that peer-to-peer ministry is of considerable importance to young people. Pope Francis wanted 'to state clearly that young people themselves are agents of youth ministry. Certainly, they need to be helped and guided, but at the same time left free to develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity.' (*Christus Vivit*, 203)

Exactly that same audacity and creativity is called for from us an archdiocese if we are to realise the vision of ours being a Church in which young people truly flourish.



Listening to the Synod

We, the people of the archdiocese, recommend that the pastoral plan include a plan to assist parishes in understanding, meeting, forming and welcoming young people and young adults, and developing locally employed and volunteer youth ministers to work with young people and young adults.

Synod recommendation #6

The question of the role of young people in the life of the archdiocese was raised by numerous people throughout the listening phase, often with a sense of concern for the future of the Church that they loved. These voices are important and have contributed to the development of this action area. However, to be true to the process suggested by Pope Francis, let us focus here on comments made by young people themselves during the listening phase.

They asked repeatedly to be listened to and that their views should be incorporated into the archdiocese's future planning. However, they feared that they would not be heard, and that the issues that they raised during the Synod process would be 'sidelined.' Listening to them means opening our ears to the desire that they repeatedly expressed for a more inclusive Church. Many in the Church may be uncomfortable to hear what young people say when we do give them space to speak. What they tell us flows from the treasury of their youth as they try to make sense of their own lives and those of their peer groups. The questions they ask touch on what is going on in their world. One succinctly summarised the concerns of many when they said,

The purpose of the Church is to support everyone, including the marginalised/oppressed: yet at times it seems that the Catholic Church is too quiet on the subject, and they are unwilling to change to reflect the priorities and attitudes of modern society – people who are more open on discussing gender/ sexuality/ climate due to its importance in our lives.

These are live issues for young people, who will immediately take note if we are unwilling to hear what they have to say about them. Others spoke of their need for spiritual nourishment – and their concern that they might not find it in the Catholic community:

I think that faith has become stagnant amongst the youth of the Church and I am worried that in the future there will be no organic spirituality for them to feed on. There is certainly a generational gap in the Church that needs to be bridged and united.

Of course, young people are as diverse as any group in the Church: some spoke of a desire for radical changes to the way that the Mass is celebrated – ‘Mass doesn’t have to be run by the traditional rules,’ one said, whilst several expressed a desire for ‘more uplifting songs’ and ‘praise.’ Yet the diversity among the ranks of the young is demonstrated by the fact that some young people also appreciated order and tradition in liturgy and prayer. This serves to remind us that when young people open to us the treasury of their youth, we might find anything there! Irrespective of our personal preferences, concerns or experiences we always stand on holy ground, where our first instinct should always be to become silent and to listen.

The Synod proposals spoke of the archdiocese’s yearning ‘to be a place where more young people find belonging, meaning, and purpose.’ This desire found practical expression in Synod recommendation 6 which received the third-highest support at the Synod, and which therefore forms a key element of our pastoral plan.



What we shall do

In order to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with young people as they experience the joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties of growing and maturing, we recognise the importance of approaching them with authenticity, offering opportunities for community and sharing with them experiences of transcendence. Therefore, we will:

- Appoint a full-time youth advisor to:
 - create a networked youth ministry that brings together present and future provision across the archdiocese.
 - Resource the development of an accompaniment model for all those involved with young people and young adults.
 - look towards locally-resourced and deployed work with young people and young adults.
- Develop a Youth Council to bring concrete proposals to the agreed diocesan structures. Membership of this will be open to young people who have been confirmed.

We will increase support for the Catholic life of our schools by:

- exploring a central archdiocesan chaplaincy structure;
- developing and promoting an accompaniment model in the Education Department’s work with schools;
- developing formation for school foundation governors.

Becoming a Church where young people and young adults flourish

Aims	Action	Timescale
We will walk alongside the young people and young adults of the archdiocese.	We will appoint a full-time youth advisor to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - create a networked youth ministry that brings together present and future provision across the archdiocese; - resource the development of an accompaniment model for all those involved with young people and young adults. - look towards locally- resourced and deployed work with young people and young adults. 	Summer 2022
We will increase support for the Catholic life of our schools by:	We will develop a Youth Synodal Council to bring concrete proposals to the agreed diocesan structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exploring a central archdiocesan chaplaincy structure; - developing and promoting an accompaniment model in the Education Department’s work with schools; - developing formation for school foundation governors. 	January 2023
		Starting March 2022

6. Becoming a Church that cares for its priests

Looking to the realities of daily life of the priests of the archdiocese we find much that brings joy and hope, but there are many griefs and anxieties. Helping clergy to flourish in the changing situation calls for both the development of new local organisational structures and patterns of support. To be authentically synodal any such structures and support systems cannot be imposed but must emerge in response to the voices of the priests themselves.



Listening to the Scriptures

(Matthew 11:28-30)

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.



'Labouring and over-burdened' is precisely how many priests in the archdiocese probably feel at this moment. Indeed, some priests voiced concerns during the Synod process that this pastoral plan would lead to them bearing an even heavier workload. On Holy Thursday 2015, Pope Francis dedicated his sermon to speaking about the tiredness of priests. He suggested that the very nature of the ministry was almost guaranteed to be draining because it requires priests to accompany people through times that are charged with raw emotion:

For us priests, what happens in the lives of our people is not like a news bulletin: we know our people, we sense what is going on in their hearts. Our own heart, sharing in their suffering, feels "compassion", is exhausted, broken into a thousand pieces, moved and even "consumed" by the people. Take this, eat this... These are the words the priest of Jesus whispers repeatedly while caring for his faithful people: Take this, eat this; take this, drink this... In this way our priestly life is given over in service, in closeness to the People of God... and this always leaves us weary.

Yet, Pope Francis observed, despite the demands on their energies it can be very difficult for priests to find rest that is truly refreshing. He recalled that priests are themselves sheep, and as such they need the help of a shepherd. Unless their lives are built upon a trusting relationship with Christ, then they risk substituting the pursuit of consumerist diversions or an incessant business or worrying for a healthy and authentic resting. The same could be said of deacons, bishops and anybody who has a ministry in the Church. Those who spend their time giving can find it difficult to care for themselves – or to allow themselves to be shepherded.

Jesus' invitation 'come to me' points to a way forward. Here Jesus echoes the way in which religious teachers spoke in his own time - and at the same time turns it upside down. The Pharisees frequently used the image of the yoke to speak about the Jewish Law - putting your head into the yoke, just as an ox is yoked to a plough, was used as an image to describe the way in which a person submitted to the requirements and observances of the Law. As Jesus said, this could become a very heavy burden indeed. His yoke, on the other hand, is 'light' and liberating, and leads not to endless activity. Instead, it goes hand in hand with resting. How can that be? And what can it teach us about the lives of the ordained priests of our archdiocese?

Two short addresses given by Popes Benedict XVI and Francis can help us to understand this better. Pope Benedict pointed out that there is a condition to the rest that Christ offers:

Jesus promised he would give everyone 'rest', but on one condition: 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart'. What is this 'yoke' which lightens instead of burdening, which instead of oppressing, uplifts? The 'yoke' of Christ is the law of love, it is his commandment which he bequeathed to his disciples (cf. Jn 13:34; 15:12). The true remedy for humanity's wounds, both material — such as hunger and injustice in all its forms — and psychological and moral, caused by a false well-being, is a rule of life based on fraternal love, whose source is in the love of God.

(Benedict XVI, Angelus, 03 July, 2011)

When Pope Benedict spoke about 'rule of life of fraternal love' he was, of course, thinking about the life of all Christians. Christians respond to the violence, the gruelling insistence on competition and the cult of success that mark our world by regarding all people as brothers and sisters rather than as competitors or enemies. However, his call to 'fraternal love' has a particular resonance among ordained priests. The Second Vatican Council taught that,

In virtue of their common sacred ordination and mission, all priests are bound together in intimate brotherhood, which naturally and freely manifests itself in mutual aid, spiritual as well as material, pastoral as well as personal, in their meetings and in communion of life, of labour and charity.

(Lumen Gentium 28, para. 3)

In a diocese the ordained priests together form a 'presbyterate' that is gathered around the bishop. This has nothing to do with the creation of a clericalist clique or cabal. Instead, it is about drawing together the priests so that their energies and different gifts can be focussed on the mission. Within the body of the presbyterate they should find the support and encouragement that they will need if they are to serve effectively the lay members of the Church as they exercise their baptismal priesthood in the world. For example, our plans for creating 'families of parishes' (development area 3) depend upon the willingness and ability of the priests to work together as a presbyterate.

With characteristic directness, Pope Francis has underscored exactly why fraternal presbyteral support is essential. For the Pope, the yoke of fraternal love borne by each Christian is a yoke of solidarity with the poor. This carries demanding implications for a priest's life and ministry:

Jesus proposes to his disciples a journey of knowledge and of imitation. Jesus is not a severe master who imposes upon others burdens which He does not bear; this was the accusation He directed at the doctors of the Law. He addresses the humble, the little ones, the poor, the needy, for He made himself little and humble. He understands the poor and the suffering because He himself is poor and tried by pain. The yoke which the poor and the oppressed bear is the same yoke that He bore before them: for this reason the yoke is light. Why is Jesus able to say these things? Because He became all things to everyone, close to all, to the poorest! He was a shepherd among the people, among the poor. He worked every day with them. Jesus was not a prince. It is bad for the Church when pastors become princes, separated from the people, far from the poorest: that is not the spirit of Jesus.

(Pope Francis, General Audience, 14 August, 2016)

Thus, Pope Francis has placed the person of Christ who accompanied the poor at the heart of his vision for the ordained priesthood. If we are to take this challenge forward in our own archdiocese, then we will need to be attentive to two things. First and foremost, we will need to pay attention to supporting the relationship of each of our priests with Christ – to help them to 'Come to him' and to 'learn from him who is meek and humble of heart.' Secondly, we will need to foster the shared identity and life of the presbyterate – to reinforce the bonds of fraternal trust that priests have with the bishop and with each other. This will call for honesty, transparency and compassion on the part of all.



Listening to the teaching of the Church

There is an essential aspect of the priest that does not change: the priest of tomorrow, no less than the priest of today, must resemble Christ. When Jesus lived on this earth, he manifested in himself the definitive role of the priest, establishing a ministerial priesthood with which the apostles were the first to be invested. This priesthood is destined to last in endless succession throughout history. In this sense the priest of the third millennium will continue the work of the priests who, in the preceding millennia, have animated the life of the Church. In the third millennium the priestly vocation will continue to be the call to live the unique and permanent priesthood of Christ. It is equally certain that the life and ministry of the priest must also adapt to every era and circumstance of life.... For our part we must therefore seek to be as open as possible to light from on high from the Holy Spirit, in order to discover the tendencies of contemporary society, recognise the deepest spiritual needs, determine the most important

concrete tasks and the pastoral methods to adopt, and thus respond adequately to human expectations.

(St John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day, 25 March 1992, no. 5)

The challenge that St John Paul II set before the ordained priests of the third millennium is demanding: the priest is to resemble Christ as generations of priests before him have done, and yet is to adapt his life and ministry to the present age. It is no wonder then, that faced with this challenge many priests are tired and are looking for direction and support. Fortunately, none of them is called to meet the challenge alone.

Care of the priests in his diocese is a key role of the bishop. The Second Vatican Council spoke about the relationship between the bishop and his priests in warm terms:

Bishops should regard priests as their brothers and friends and be concerned as far as they are able for their material and especially for their spiritual well-being. For above all upon the bishops rests the heavy responsibility for the sanctity of their priests. Therefore, they should exercise the greatest care in the continual formation of their priests. They should gladly listen to their priests, indeed consult them and engage in dialogue with them in those matters which concern the necessities of pastoral work and welfare of the diocese.

(Vatican II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum Ordinis, no 7, para 2)

More recently, St John Paul II has underscored in very human terms how deep is the bond between each ordained priest and his bishop - and how important is the bishop's duty of care:

Each diocesan bishop has as one of his primary duties the spiritual care of his presbyterate: the action of the priest who places his hands in the hands of the bishop on the day of his priestly ordination, as he professes to him 'filial respect and obedience', can at first sight seem a one-way gesture. In reality, the gesture commits them both: priest and bishop. The young presbyter chooses to entrust himself to the bishop and the bishop for his part obliges himself to look after those hands.

(St John Paul II, Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Gregis on The Bishop, Servant of the Gospel for the Hope of the World, 16 Oct 2003, no. 47)

Pope Francis encapsulated this in his usual direct manner when he met with the Polish bishops in 2016: 'If we don't show our fatherhood to our priests, how can we ask them to be fathers to others?' Of course, in carrying out this responsibility, if the bishop is not himself to be overwhelmed, he needs to draw on the wisdom, experience and help of all the members of the diocese. He exercises his pastoral care of the priests in close association with members of the presbyterate, and also with the laity. Listening to the concerns they voiced during the Synod process about the life of the priests has been a strong motivation in making this one of our development areas.



Listening to the Synod

We, the people of the archdiocese, recommend that the pastoral plan include a strong commitment to ordained ministry including a programme of support and formation for priests, deacons, and seminarians, and coordination of their work alongside lay ministers.

Synod recommendation #3

Both clergy and lay people expressed concern about the welfare of the priests during the listening phase of the Synod. Priests spoke of the challenges they faced in juggling multiple demands – and how to maintain their own wellbeing in the face of what they regarded as an unmanageable set of tasks. One said, ‘Fatigue is creeping in, I feel I am approaching a tipping point, support is waning and there is a strong sense of hopelessness among the people we serve.’ Another listed the issues that weighed him down:

‘Workload and the continuing pain and challenge of change. The loneliness of carrying and leading a community. Work life balance. The lack of support and interest from the diocese in its priests and duty of care for them.’

Lay people, too, spoke of their concerns for their clergy. One person said that the archdiocese needed to,

‘Ensure the health and well-being of our priests particularly with regard to the practices of lone working, mental health, responding to verbal, physical and emotional abuse. Life beyond parish ministry and opportunities for retirement and welfare within the archdiocese.’

Another spoke of the positive impact of priestly wellbeing on the life of the parish community and of its mission: ‘Good health (mentally and physically) and happiness of the priests have a domino effect on the happiness of the Church members. This allows for a more realistic and passionate evangelisation.’



What we shall do

As we noted in development area 2, the ordained priesthood exists to enable the gifts of the baptised to flourish as they exercise their royal priesthood in the world. If a priest’s primary role is to help the people to become saints, then he, too must be committed to a life of holiness. His commitment to pastoral charity can only be rooted in a deep relationship with Christ.

As we look forward to establishing families of parishes in the archdiocese, one of the goods which will come from this new reality is greater mutual support for our priests. It can be a great temptation in priestly ministry to become a ‘lone ranger,’ isolated from other priests. Working together as a team will help them build each other up: ‘As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another’ (Prov 27:17). While priests will not necessarily be living together as a result of families of parishes, they will be working together, praying together, and planning together for their parishes. Happier, healthier and holier priests will make happier, healthier and holier parishes, which in turn will ensure a happier, healthier and holier archdiocese.

We recognise that it is essential that the priests themselves play an active role in developing our plans for the future in this regard. Therefore, we shall establish an externally facilitated process to explore with the priests of the archdiocese what needs to be developed to effectively support their flourishing in the human, spiritual, liturgical, theological, intellectual and pastoral aspects of their lives.

	Aims	Action	Timescale
Becoming a Church that cares for its priests	We will enable priests to flourish in our changing situations.	We will establish an externally facilitated process to explore with the priests of the archdiocese what needs to be developed to effectively support their flourishing in the human, spiritual, liturgical, theological, intellectual and pastoral aspects of their lives.	Start: February 2022 Close of consultation: July 2022 Publication of report: Autumn 2022

Conclusion from Archbishop Malcolm

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.... And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

Our pastoral plan ends with this quotation from Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles. Here we see the Church living an authentically Christian life: following the teaching of the apostles, walking alongside one another in love and care, partaking in the sacraments, and praying together. We see how God blesses the first Christian community by adding to their numbers. We see a mystery, a reality at once human and divine, the work of the Creator Spirit. The Church is the sacrament of the risen Christ in our midst. She is alive because he is alive. She grows with the vigour and power of his divine life. And her living is not for her own sake but for the sake of her mission.

In this text from Acts, St Luke paints a beautiful portrait of the Church in her first days in Jerusalem. Since then, like a tongue of fire, this fire has spread over the face of the whole earth. The Church in the Archdiocese of Liverpool is one of the countless places throughout the world where this flame burns today. What St Luke said of the Church in Jerusalem can be said truly of us. We are the Church of Christ in this locality, founded by Christ and alive in Christ and so we take up the challenge to continue to become the Church that God is calling us to be.

This is not something we do individually but a communal task, a work of the whole body of Christ to which we belong. If we are living as joyful missionary disciples, our life as Church is itself a radiant witness to the power of God at work in the world.

I am firmly convinced that the graces bestowed upon the Church in the Archdiocese of Liverpool in Synod 2020 are a great spiritual treasure, riches which the Holy Spirit has poured out upon us for the monumental task that lies ahead.

I commend this pastoral plan to you invoking the intercession of Our Blessed Lady Immaculate, St Joseph and St Kentigern, the patrons of our archdiocese.



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- ³ *Gaudium et Spes*, 22, paragraph 1
- ⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 274
- ⁵ *Gaudium et Spes*, 13, paragraph 3
- ⁶ Peter 3:13; Revelation chapter 21
- ⁷ *Laudato Si'*, 99; citing Col 1:16
- ⁸ *Laudato Si'*, 217
- ⁹ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 6
- ¹⁰ eg, Hebrews 5:5-10
- ¹¹ John 14:6
- ¹² John 11:52; Ephesians 1:3-10
- ¹³ 1 Corinthians 15:20-28
- ¹⁴ John 10:11-16
- ¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 31, 34-36
- ¹⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, 10
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- ¹⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11, paragraph 1
- ¹⁹ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43
- ²⁰ *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 3
- ²¹ *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 11; quoting *Lumen Gentium*, 3
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- ²⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14
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- ²⁷ Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015
- ²⁸ Letter to Cardinal Marc Ouellet, 19 March 2016
- ²⁹ Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops
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- ³⁴ McPartlan, Paul, 'Priesthood and the Deacon,' in *Chicago Studies*, 56:2 (Winter 2017), pp. 38-53, at p. 49



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