

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

Mission Plan for the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth

2023-2033

“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

PLAN

We Have a Plan:

I place before you this Plan with great joy and confidence. It is called You Will Be My Witnesses. It is a ten-year mission plan for our Diocese of Portsmouth, for our parishes and schools, clergy and people. It is a plan for the renewal of every aspect of our Christian lives and an invitation to join in a renewed missionary effort to bring the Gospel to all around us, especially people in their time of need.

The Plan comes with my authority as the Shepherd of the Diocese, and it gives everyone a direction in which to travel. It is a plan that seeks to build on previous plans, including Go Out and Bear Fruit (2003) and the Clergy Convocation (2017). But it is a plan that essentially has come from you, the people and clergy of our Diocese, from listening to you and consulting you. It is the fruit of intensive prayer, reflection and discussion. Clergy have discussed the plan collectively, in their canonical gatherings and in local groupings. The laity have contributed to this plan through ‘roadshows’ across the islands and mainland, and local parish discussions on the draft. Many ideas have been added too from the extensive survey A Thousand Voices and the thousands who contributed to the synodal consultation. It is a plan, inspired by God’s grace, that I hope and pray will unite us all in a common purpose.

“Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church.”

You will be my witnesses. Let me explain the background. The Church's fundamental purpose is to evangelise. As St. Paul VI once said: "[The Church] exists in order to evangelise, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace." (Evangelii Nuntiandi:36) To evangelise means 'to proclaim the Good News' of Jesus Christ so that others might freely seek to become His disciples, within His Body the Church. In this way all can find salvation and be drawn into an eternal relationship with the Blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Every member of the Church is called to take part in this work: bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church.

Evangelisation is always a two-way activity: ad intra and ad extra. It is about us being evangelised ourselves (ad intra) - a life-long effort - as well as about reaching out to others (ad extra) by our prayer, example, words and charitable deeds. There is no programme nor a magic formula. As St. John Paul II said: "We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you!" (Novo Millennio Ineunte: 29) Evangelisation is essentially about entering into a personal-passionate relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, He the Master, we, His disciples. This is our religion: we are called by Him (vocation); we are formed by Him (formation), and we are sent by Him (apostolate). The immediate goal of this work is the individual, but the ultimate goal is to evangelise culture, so that the world

we live in can be leavened and infused with the values of Christ and His Gospel. As Christians, we are called to change the world.

Over the centuries, the Church has had considerable success. Today, not to forget our one billion brothers and sisters in the other Christian communities, there are almost one and a half billion Catholics. 25% of these are in Europe and North America, 75% in Africa, India, Asia, South America and elsewhere. The peoples of Europe were gradually baptised over the centuries by many saints. In the late-seventeenth century, however, a massive shift in Western culture occurred with the Enlightenment. This ushered in new ways of thinking based on empirical science, technology, and the industrial revolution, on national identity and on modern social and political philosophies. Since then, in our post-modern world, other forces have risen which are in opposition to the values of our Christian faith. It is no surprise that given the world we live in, the Church in recent times has lost much of Her influence. There are now fewer and fewer Christians who practice their faith. What is more, in our own land, over the last 50 years a religious revolution has quietly occurred, by which Britain has become secular. Whilst through immigration other religions now flourish, most notably Islam, millions of others have dropped their Christian beliefs, church connections and religious practices. Surveys show that over half the population now say they are 'nones,' people of no religion. Most of us are all too familiar with this from our own families.

How has the Church responded? A God-given help has been the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), called by St. John XXIII, which is revisited in the Synodal processes. The Council went back to basics in order to modernise every dimension of Christian life for the sake of evangelising the modern world. The Council, together with the movements of reform it released and the many liturgical, canonical and practical changes that have come in, has made the Church much more adaptable, fit for mission in this twenty-first century. Its task is still continuing, which is why the teaching of the Church and the direction set by the Second Vatican Council remain an ever-constant and ever-fresh point of reference for us today.

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” - Matthew 28:20

Yet if cultural shifts have impacted faith and practice, we must also acknowledge that the Church Herself in Her internal culture has often not responded adequately. Today some Catholics take their faith seriously, others less so: many Catholics do not practice. Differing viewpoints within the Church have become hardened. The clergy abuse-crisis and the care of victims have been a cause of great scandal, undermining trust and sapping energy.

Some Catholics are very traditional. Others demand change, not least in Church teachings on sexual morality, LGBTQ+ issues and the role of women. Many decry how new forms of clericalism are preventing lay involvement and responsibility.

So external and internal factors impair the Church's mission. Yet the words of Jesus still resound in our hearts: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20). These are words that speak powerfully. Surely, they speak powerfully to us. They tell us that it is our perennial task as members of Christ's Body the Church to be evangelisers.

In his book *Let us Dream* (2020), Pope Francis speaks of the world and the Church as being at a kairos moment. In the New Testament, kairos means the appointed time, the time when God acts, a time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action, an opportune and decisive moment. I believe the Diocese of Portsmouth is at such a kairos moment. All the global trends are reflected at our local level and our local level has many particular challenges of its own. We are surely at a kairos moment.

One option would be to continue along the road we are on, doing what we do now, with more of the same, in the hope that somehow things will come right. Did not Jesus promise His Church would never fail? Yet Jesus never promised that the Church would not fail in this or that particular place. Think of North Africa. In the Early Church, this was the land of St. Cyprian, St. Augustine and the Church Fathers, yet by the seventh century, Christianity in those parts had been completely wiped

out. It is possible that in the decades ahead the Church, continuing its slow decline, could vanish from Britain.

Yet, there is another option. Let us borrow and invert a phrase from St. Ignatius Loyola: “to work as if everything depended on God, and to pray as if everything depends on us.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2834). In other words, we could recognise we are in a new apostolic age. We could try to turn the ship. We could seek to deepen faith in ourselves and to propose the faith more effectively and attractively to others. We could respond to St. John Paul II’s call for a new evangelisation, an evangelisation “new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression.” Indeed, to communicate the Gospel more effectively in this new post-modern culture and to hand on Christ’s message not least to the young, then we could try new methods, new expressions and new means. To do this, of course, we need to pray for enormous creativity. We need the creativity that comes from being faithful to Christ and led by the Holy Spirit. We need the creativity that comes from remaining absolutely faithful to our Catholic Tradition, yet absolutely open to finding new ways of engaging with the people of today. The issue is not about a new religion, new doctrines or a different faith. No, the issue is about the Holy Spirit and creatively responding to God’s grace in my own life and the challenges we face.

As Catholics, it is always tempting to focus on changing structures and institutions, changing parishes and schools, changing practices and even doctrines. We are experts at talking Church, property, money, structures.

True, structural change, in particular the shift to a more 'synodal' way of working, especially in our parishes and communities, is crucial. We do need to change the way we collaborate, clergy and laity, and we do need to share responsibility more effectively for the mission of the Church. We need to heal and refresh the internal culture of our Diocese. So yes, to new ways of working. But what is really needed goes much deeper than this. This is not just about the Church of the Lord; it is about the Lord of the Church. This is really about our relationship with Jesus Christ. This is really about us changing, changing ourselves, a deep, radical spiritual renewal as individuals, about how we think and live, about how we love others, how we collaborate with one together, and how to take responsibility. This is about the call to holiness and authenticity. We must put Christ at the centre of our lives, following his commandment: "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16) This is how you will be my witnesses.

"Be holy, for I am holy" - 1 Peter 1:16

Our diocesan vision of bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church comes from the Lord's words: 'Go ... and make disciples of all nations.' It's about reaching in and reaching out – 'reaching in' to the many Catholics to fan into a flame the flickering wicks, and 'reaching out' to the millions around us, religiously adrift and unchurched. It's about seeking out those who have fallen away. It's about engaging everyone in church in the Lord's saving mission and making room for them to contribute their own charisms, gifts and talents. It's about becoming outward-facing servants and servant-

parishes, welcoming the stranger and caring for the poor, the lonely and those on the margins. It's about respecting and nurturing God's creation and living more simply. It's about connecting with our young people, currently leaving the Church in droves, and finding ways to help them encounter the Person of Christ. It's about not spending all our time, money and energy on ecclesiastical buildings, plant and property, when, frankly, there are hardly many people within them, but on directing our resources more intentionally towards the mission.

My prayer, then, is for a deep spiritual renewal.

I pray that every member of the Diocese will be passionately committed to the new evangelisation, to mission and service. I pray for transformational change, so that in ten years' time, we can hand on a wonderful legacy to the young currently in our schools, to the priests currently in formation, to our families growing up and to our vibrant parish communities. Catholicism is always a broad tent. Its walls are porous. It will always comprise a big range of people at all sorts of differing levels of conversion, faith and commitment. It will comprise people of different types, different tastes, different styles. Catholicism is never a "You are either in - or you are out" type of religion. It is a big ship, with a large range of seats and services. But if we collaborate with God's grace over these next years, we could imagine a deep renewal taking place, with a deeper engagement and a missionary awareness. I dream of a Diocese in better shape, internally healed and renewed,

with new faces, young families, more vocations and a harvest from ecclesial movements.

You will be my witnesses. We must not underestimate the difficulties and challenges. Evangelisation can seem an impossible ambition, like flogging a dead horse. Yet the issue of religion will never go away. Every human being wants to be happy, to be loved, to belong, to live forever. Humans are built for this, and none of this is possible without a relationship with God. Christianity responds to humanity's deepest longings. It gives friendship with Christ, immortality, a sense of belonging within His Body the Church. It gives the grace, energy and power to do the impossible, to bear sickness, suffering, sadness, death. It gives life meaning and purpose; it grounds ethics; it builds community; it encourages self-sacrifice and service of the poor. It offers the glue that fosters social cohesion. As Catholics, yes, we face many challenges. Yet this land is a fertile mission-field. Dig through the rocky ground and water wells up, even if dirty. There may be campaign-groups working against us, but it is rare to encounter direct hostility. It can be hard going, but there is no need for despondency. Christ is with us, and at this moment, the Holy Spirit is at work in hearts wooing them towards Him. It is not the 'product' we offer that is defective but the ability of people within a busy, consumer culture, full of urgent demands, to hear God's inner voice and call.

We cannot be close to Christ without a deep and abiding reverence and love for Him in the Sacrifice of the Mass. The Holy Eucharist is "the source and summit" of the Church's life and mission, a Mystery to be believed, a

Mystery to be celebrated and a Mystery to be lived. The transformative power of the Eucharist builds up the image of Christ implanted within us at Baptism, binding us together as the Body of Christ. Indeed, in receiving Christ in the Eucharist, we become what we eat. As St. Augustine once put it: “If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the Table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond ‘Amen’ (‘yes, it is true!’) and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, ‘the Body of Christ’ and respond ‘Amen.’ Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your ‘Amen’ may be true.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1396). Spiritual renewal requires us to draw deeply from this inexhaustible wellspring of salvation. Each one of us is called personally to renew our relationship with Christ in the Eucharist, so that we can receive from Him the strength to persevere in His mission.

Moreover, the Blessed Mother is our most powerful helper, the advocate before the throne of God, our protector and the most efficacious mediator of divine grace. Our Diocese of Portsmouth is dedicated to Mary Immaculate and so the Blessed Virgin Mary is in a special way our Mother, Mother of our clergy and our people, Mother of our schools and parishes. She, along with the wise Bishop St. Edmund of Abingdon, our Secondary Patron, and the inspiring patron of our youth, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, are even now earnestly praying for us. If we pray, if we remain faithful, if we lead by holy example, if we act wisely, enacting a thought-through strategy that seeks to bring people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church, then surely, we can

dare to hope that God will preserve us and, what is more, bless us with increase over the times ahead.

So, I commend this Plan to each of you. I ask each and every one of you to study this Plan and generously to respond to it. I ask you to respond to the challenge laid down by Christ to proclaim the Gospel. I ask you to respond personally with all your heart and soul. This is the Kairos moment: let us be open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is right to dream. It is right to hope. It is right to trust in God. In our Diocese there are already so many signs of springtime, with a new energy, a new enthusiasm, a new willingness to change and collaborate, and a new desire to do things differently. So let us trust in God's providence and resolve to do our best. Then indeed the words of the Lord will be fulfilled, words that inspire us and words that sum up this plan: You will be my witnesses.

In Corde Iesu,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Philip". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Philip" is written in a cursive, flowing script.

Rt. Rev. Philip A. Egan BA, STL, phd
Bishop of Portsmouth

VISION

We Have a Vision:

This Ten-Year Mission Plan, *You Will Be My Witnesses*, seeks to build on past plans and aspirations to meet the challenges of our time, trusting that the Holy Spirit will guide us, as we journey together for next ten years so that the treasures of our faith give hope to future generations. Our vision in summary:

Christ-centred missionary communities founded on a strong partnership between our parishes, schools, small groups, families, and individuals all working together to grow in faith and authentically witness the love of God. Communities which reach out, welcome, and inspire so that our Diocese may truly bring people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church.

Our clergy, religious and lay faithful will joyfully and intentionally deepen their relationship with God and confidently share their faith with others, to become vibrant missionary communities.

Everyone, regardless of their background, current life situation or place on their faith journey, will feel a strong sense of welcome, support, and belonging. Fertile ground where every person can bring their gifts to the life of the community and where vocations to all states of life flourish, but especially to the priesthood and religious life. Special focus will be given to our young Church, including young families, so that the lifelong journey of discipleship will be nurtured.

The reality of the Eucharist as the source and summit of our lives as Catholics will be evident through inspiring Masses and liturgies so that the “Sunday experience” is transformative for all - old, young, regular parishioners, newcomers, and guests.

Outside of Mass, there will be many and varied opportunities for people to get to know each other and grow in faith. Small groups and different parish events will help people, of all ages and circumstances, to meet others and stay connected.

Our charity, love, and support for people in need in our communities and overseas, through practical help and service will be an integral part of our identity and recognised by the wider community.

We will seek out opportunities to work with other Christian communities to share our faith, speak out on issues that really matter, and be visibly united in Jesus Christ to reflect His light in this peaceless world.

Our community of 87 parishes will work together within the family of 24 pastoral areas to shape a more resilient structure for this age: becoming 24 parishes over the next ten years. Courageous decisions will be needed to ensure resources and energy are released for mission, rather than continuing to prioritise the maintenance of buildings.

Our Catholic schools will form an integral part of our missionary communities; centres of evangelisation, prayer, and formation, as envisaged by our strategy for

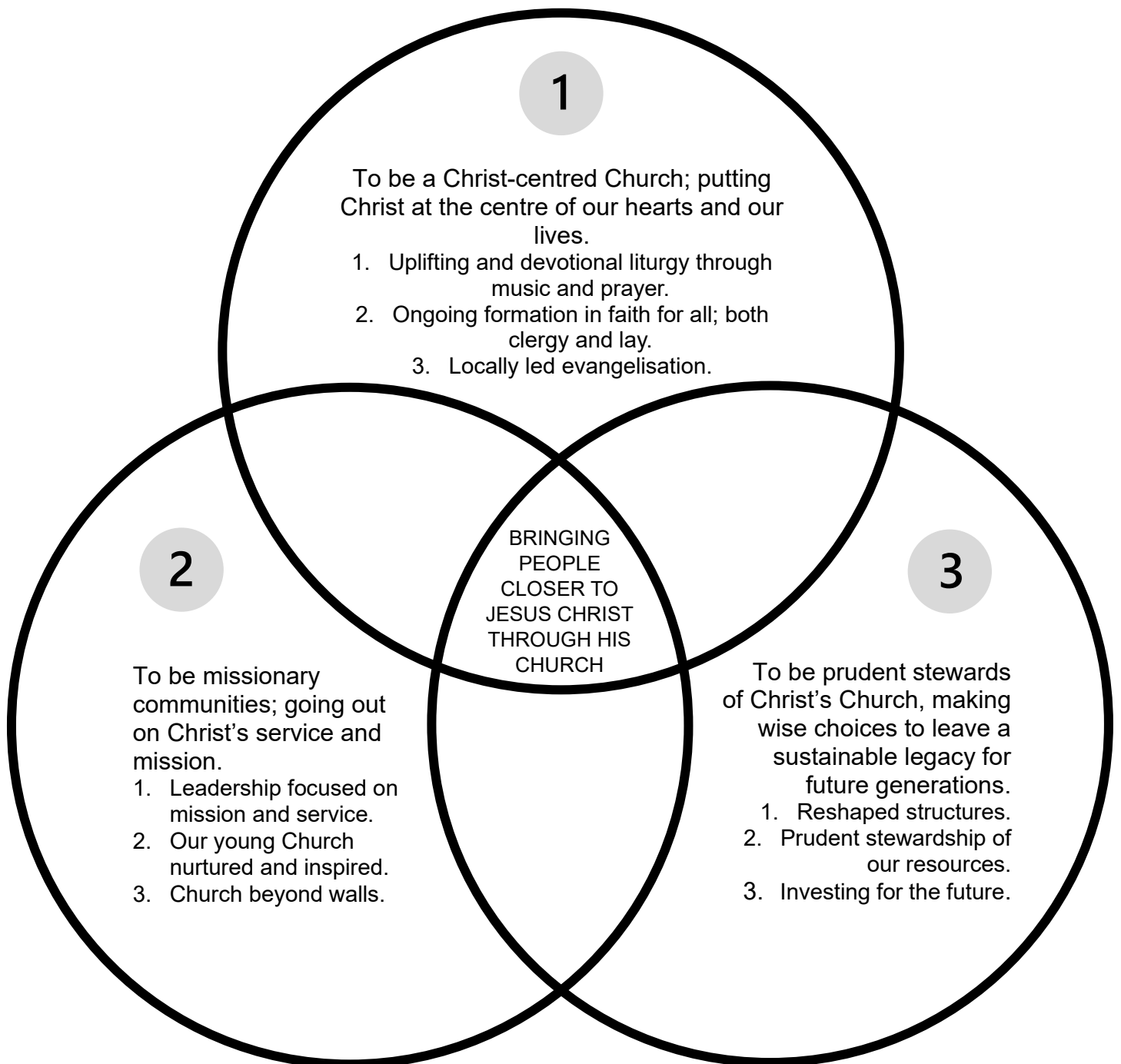
schools, That They May Have Life, developed in collaboration with our school leaders.

We trust in the help of the Lord and His Blessed Mother so that our Diocese will become a well-stewarded missionary community centred on Christ and have a vibrant future bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church.

“I have sought nothing else but You, O God”
St Edmund of Abingdon, Secondary Patron of our
Diocese

MISSION

We Have a Mission:



Our Mission Plan has three overarching principles:

- To be a Christ-centred Church; putting Christ at the centre of our hearts and Our lives.
- To be missionary communities; going out on Christ's service and mission.
- To be prudent stewards of Christ's Church; making wise choices to leave a sustainable legacy for future generations.

Each of these three themes are linked and interdependent on each other to realise our core vision of bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church.

Within each of our overarching principles are three priorities for focus. These have emerged through our consultations and learning from other dioceses across the world.

“According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ...” - 1 Peter 1:3-5

Since the publication of the first draft of You Will Be My Witnesses last summer, each of our parishes and central functions have been encouraged to:

PRAY and reflect on Christ's mission and its relevance today; and on how that mission is currently expressed in the actions and priorities of local faith communities and central functions.

DISCERN and decide how to respond to God's call for renewal; what we continue, what we change, and what we leave behind.

ACT and implement plans, starting with small steps leading to ambitious outcomes.

This cycle of prayer, discernment and action will continue over the next ten years as we work together to realise the vision and goals of our Mission Plan.

Three phases will underpin the implementation of our Mission Plan.

It is envisaged that formation of new parishes will happen on a rolling basis across the three phases, according to local readiness, with all areas completing the process by 2033.

1. DEVELOPING – September 2023 - November 2026

This phase will see the development and agreement of local plans.

Other key milestones in this phase include commissioning a programme of clergy support and ongoing development; finalising enabling strategies

(such as finance, fundraising and estate management) and appointing key roles to lead specific areas of work, including catechesis, liturgy and music ministry.

2. MATURING – December 2026 - September 2029

This phase will see the updating of local plans to reflect learning from Phase 1.

It is envisaged that the majority of newly amalgamated parishes will be established canonically in this phase of the plan, on a rolling basis according to local readiness until 2029. Plans for those not completed will be the focus of further support to enable completion by the end of phase 3.

3. GROWING – October 2029 - July 2033

Phase 3 will begin with a three-month period of reflection to inform the shape of a future mission plan beyond 2033 taking account of the context at that time.

It is expected that all pastoral areas will become unified parishes by July 2033.

“My greatest happiness is to be before the Blessed Sacrament, where my heart is, as it were, in Its centre.” -
St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

1 . A CHRIST-CENTRED CHURCH

Putting Christ at the centre of our hearts and our lives:

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat at the Lord’s supper.” Vatican Council II
Sacrosanctum Concilium, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 10

The first principle of our Mission Plan is to be a Christ-centred Church. It calls for renewal centred on Jesus Christ and our deepening relationship with Him. It means choosing to love what He loves and following His example: loving our Father, depending on the Holy Spirit, caring for others as we would wish to be cared for, and striving to build God’s Church for today and tomorrow.

“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” - 2 Chronicles 7:14

Our ambition is that each one of us, clergy and lay, will be formed to foster a deep and lasting personal relationship with Jesus Christ throughout our pilgrim journey. Prayer and the breaking of bread were of central importance in the lives of the Apostles and

remain central to our Christian lives today. Inspired by the Mass and Sacraments of the Church, we will grow in faith and be confident in evangelising others. Our hope for our Diocese in 2033 is that each of us will experience:

- True dependence on the Holy Spirit, inspiring and guiding all that we do, so that we may truly become a Church at prayer.
- A renewed sacramental life: through an emphasis on worthy participation in the celebration of the Holy Mass, to reaffirm the Eucharist as the source and summit of our Christian lives.
- The gift of reconciliation; through the regular Sacrament of Confession.
- Formation in all aspects of a life in faith; spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral.

A radical recommitment to fostering our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which will transform our lives and the lives of those we encounter. Three priorities of focus support our principle of being a Christ-centred Church:

1. Uplifting and devotional liturgy through music and prayer.
2. Ongoing formation in faith for all; both clergy and lay.
3. Locally-led evangelisation

1.1 UPLIFTING AND DEVOTIONAL LITURGY THROUGH MUSIC AND PRAYER:

Liturgy is an essential dimension of our life in faith, spiritual growth, and outreach to others. It bears the fruit of active, intentional discipleship following evangelisation, faith, and conversion.

“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” - Matthew 26:26-28

“To bring to the faithful something that they have a right to: the beauty of the liturgy, its sacrality, silence, recollection, the mystical dimension, and adoration. The liturgy should put us face to face with God in a personal relationship of intense intimacy. It should plunge us into the inner life of the Most Holy Trinity. [...]” Cardinal Robert Sarah in *Adoremus* (2017)

Our last plan, *Go Out and Bear Fruit* (2005), emphasised the centrality of the Sunday Eucharist which “more than anything else, establishes us as the gathered community of the disciples of Christ”. This is reiterated in this Mission Plan; with a particular emphasis on the experience of newcomers and recently returned Catholics.

The importance of the Sunday Mass and Eucharist in our lives calls for particular attention, including an intentional music ministry which enhances the liturgy, well-prepared preaching which breaks open the Word and helps others to apply it to their daily life, and an atmosphere of faith and reverence where attention is truly focused on the Lord.

Attention should also be given to our Sacraments and our other expressions of worship. These include the transformative reality of Eucharistic Adoration and the many forms of personal or communal prayer, devotions, praise, thanksgiving, or petition at the heart of our Catholic tradition. Thought should be given to the availability (time and location), communication, formation, welcome, and preparation by those leading and those participating, and to the environment in which worship and Sacraments take place.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” - Colossians 3:16

1.2 ONGOING FORMATION IN FAITH FOR ALL; BOTH CLERGY AND LAY:

Jesus devoted a great deal of His time on earth forming those who followed Him, through teaching and example. He calls to us to be missionary disciples, this includes a call to grow in holiness, faith and understanding of the

commandment to love one another as we are loved. We are all, clergy or lay, pilgrims on a journey together.

Once we have encountered Jesus and chosen to follow Him, the journey of conversion to ever greater spiritual, pastoral, intellectual and human maturity unfolds. It is reflected in a growing life of prayer, regular encounters with Christ in His Word and Sacraments, in witness and testimony with fellow disciples, the cultivation of habits which help us grow in virtue, a commitment to receiving and sharing catechesis and a dedicated service to others.

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How do you read it?’ And he answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.’ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to

an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' And Jesus said to him, 'You go, and do likewise.' - Luke 10:25-37

1.3 LOCALLY-LED EVANGELISATION:

The Great Commission, given by Jesus as He ascended to the Father, was four-fold in its mandate to the Church: to evangelise so as to make new disciples, to sacramentalise that discipleship, to catechise those disciples, and to memorialise His presence among us (Matthew 28:19-20).

The vitality and future of our parishes and school communities depend on us being faithful to Jesus's call to mission and working with the Holy Spirit to bring others closer to Jesus Christ and, at the same time, allowing ourselves to encounter Him anew.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:19-20

The Church in our time exists in a vastly changed environment to that of the early Church. It finds itself facing a new stage of evangelisation (Directory for

Catechesis 2020: 38f). It is not that the Word has changed, but that we are called to a renewed effort which is “new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression” (Pope St. John Paul II) Evangelisation is directed not only to those in distant lands who have never heard of the Gospel, but to those around us in our diverse and post-Christian society. Our neighbourhoods, workplace, schools, and even homes, are all mission territory.

In our missionary efforts, we must note that each person has particular needs, as the Directory for Catechesis (2020) acknowledges. There are those of deep Christian faith who need pastoral care and assistance to grow in the faith and spiritual life. There are those who have not really heard the Gospel of Christ at all or encountered the person of Jesus. There are those who have had a Catholic upbringing but for one reason or another have drifted away.

The story of the Church has always been that of a community of faith. A loving community which helps others, whatever their background, hear and embrace the Good News and continue to grow in faith long past first conversion.

Central to evangelisation is the proclamation of the kerygma, the great story of Jesus Christ, His life, His death, and His resurrection as the revelation of God’s saving love and mercy. This is realised by:

- Finding ways to go beyond the parish community to those who do not know Jesus Christ, or who have rejected Him.

- Sharing the Good News with infrequent churchgoers and the loosely affiliated to encourage them to grow in love for the Lord and in the life of His body, the Church.
- Inspiring the hearts of those who are already part of our parish communities.

“It has been good to work together with all the priests and representatives from each parish community to plan how we can ensure that the mass, sacraments and all church life will remain accessible to everyone and go beyond the parish to bring more people into the church, to enjoy their own relationship with Christ. I’m so pleased that young people and their chaplains are involved and enthusiastic about promoting their views on how they can more fully live their faith. I think that the communities all working together as one parish will be more efficient, resourceful and supportive in developing our local church- more coordinated. I guess we need to share that and involve everyone!”

Chris (Leigh Park Parish, Havant Evangelisation Team)

ACTION PLAN

ACTION FOR A CHRIST-CENTRED CHURCH	PASTORAL AREA	DIOCESE	LEAD COORDINATOR	PHASE
Discern & develop local plan to address the principles and priorities of the You Will Be My Witnesses Mission Plan.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Focus on improving the delivery of hymns, homily, and hospitality ensuring variety and beauty.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Develop & publish teaching resources about the significance of the Mass Sacraments and Liturgies across all communication channels.		●	Director of Liturgical Formation	Phase 1
Develop a comprehensive approach to welcome in each church community to enable participation of all.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Ensure that churches of the area are open in daylight hours for prayer and visits to the Blessed Sacrament.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Promote opportunities in every community & school for Eucharistic Adoration, Rosary, Lectio Divina, and other devotions.	●	●	Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator & Episcopal Vicar for Education	Phase 1
Provide guidance and resources on family and personal prayer.	●	●	Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator & Director of Liturgical Formation	Phase 1
<i>Develop resources to support prayer and popular devotions and publish through communication channels.</i>		●	<i>Director of Liturgical Formation</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Appoint a Director for Music to lead the development of music ministry across the Diocese.		●	Episcopal Vicar for Vocation	Phase 1
Appoint a Choral Director to support schools and young people in choral development.		●	Director of Music & Episcopal Vicar for Education	Phase 1
<i>Work with schools to provide opportunities for participation in music ministry in local parishes.</i>		●	<i>Director of Music & Episcopal Vicar for Education</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Promote a better understanding of and increase accessibility to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Develop a plan to engage the sick and housebound in prayer for the mission of the Church and offer healing liturgies	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Appoint a Coordinator for Clergy Intellectual, Spiritual and Ministerial Development.		●	Vicar for Clergy & Director of Permanent Diaconate	Phase 1
Develop a framework for support, ongoing development, formation, and fraternity for clergy.		●	Vicar for Clergy & Director of Permanent Diaconate	Phase 1
Develop Clergy Accompanied Reflection Programme and roll-out for clergy ordained in the last 7 years.		●	Vicar for Clergy & Director of Permanent Diaconate	Phase 1
<i>Roll-out Accompanied Reflection Programme for all clergy.</i>		●	<i>Vicar for Clergy & Director of Permanent Diaconate</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>

“Without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing.” - St. Therese of Lisieux

ACTION FOR A CHRIST-CENTRED CHURCH	PASTORAL AREA	DIOCESE	LEAD COORDINATOR	PHASE
Provide a programme for clergy to develop their leadership skills and confidence in working with schools.		●	Episcopal Vicar for Education	Phase 1
Provide structured onboarding and induction programme for non-diocesan priests.		●	Vicar for Clergy & Episcopal Vicar for Religious	Phase 1
Develop role for deacons in the context of pastoral area structures and the priorities of the Mission Plan.	●	●	Director of Permanent Diaconate, Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator & Deacons	Phase 1
<i>Develop the Diaconal Formation Programme to reflect the Mission Plan.</i>		●	<i>Director of Permanent Diaconate</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Promote participation in the Called & Gifted programme to nurture the contribution of the Faithful in the life of the Church.	●	●	Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator & Leader of Called & Gifted Programme	Phase 1
Develop approaches to sacramental preparation programmes, for example based on personal/individual readiness rather than age or cohort.	●	●	Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Develop and implement a volunteer support programme, including induction, training & communication.	●	●	Head of People & Administration & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
<i>Appoint a Head of Catechesis to coordinate provision across the Diocese & provide training for local leaders.</i>		●	<i>Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
<i>Provide a formation programme for liturgical ministers, e.g. Musicians, Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion</i>		●	<i>Director of Liturgical Formation</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Ensure all who work in Catholic schools receive ongoing formation in the mission of a Catholic school		●	Episcopal Vicar for Education	Phase 2
Provide resources to support the development of <i>Missionary Discipleship Pathways</i> .		●	Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation	Phase 2
Encourage the faithful to adopt the Six Holy Habits, especially belonging to support-groups.	●	●	Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator & Bishop and Bishop's Council	Phase 1
Develop an annual plan for enabling seekers to encounter the Lord outside of Mass, including through accompaniment and participation in small groups.	●	●	Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Provide resources to support vocations to all states of life.	●	●	Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator & Episcopal Vicar for Vocation	Phase 1

Further suggestions & examples:

- Ensure all local and diocesan meetings begin with a period of Prayer and Formation.
- Encourage small groups e.g., Alpha, Sycamore, RCIA, Altar Servers, Scouts, 15-18 & 18-30 groups, men's groups, women's groups, catechesis for children not in RC schools, etc.
- Consider joining Divine Renovation network and its supports.
- Appoint a local lead for music ministry.
- Appoint a local Minister of Catechesis and Lead for Evangelisation.

- Develop a pastoral area website and social media channels, linking them with diocesan communication channels.
- Consider introducing NET ministries into schools.
- Consider initiatives such as Night Fever, to open hearts to the Lord and His Church.

2. MISSIONARY COMMUNITIES:

GOING OUT ON CHRIST'S SERVICE AND MISSION:

“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.” Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013)

The second principle of our Mission Plan is to be missionary communities. The Church exists to evangelise; to bring people closer to Jesus Christ. Our missionary communities should be welcoming to all, evangelistic, and understanding in how to support others wherever they are on their pilgrim journey.

Being a missionary community, which realises the call to glorify the Lord by our lives means reaching out to others in their time of need, taking an active role in caring for our Common Home, being a Witness in the secular world, and working with other Christians in all these areas.

Missionary communities are not simply parishes. They are formed of parishes, schools, chaplaincies, small groups, families, and individuals all working together to grow in faith and reach out to others. Recognising, discerning, and embracing the gifts and talents of our ethnically diverse communities is integral to becoming a missionary community.

“From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” - Ephesians 4:16

Our ambition is to become a Diocese of bolder mission-focused communities which:

- Foster a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and become fertile soil for vocations and bringing Christ's love to the world.
- Welcome everyone; all will feel part of the faith community and valued for the gifts, talents, and experiences they bring.
- Embrace strangers and seekers, who will feel at home in our churches.
- Work collaboratively and as parishes and schools and be known as places of support and encouragement for the young, old, and everyone in between.
- Inspire our young people through involvement in the life of the Church, service to those in their time of need, care for creation, fostering social changes to secure justice and equality for every human life, and living a life of Christian service modelled on the Lord's life.
- Develop young leaders and enable them to respond to their vocation in life.
- Enable vibrant and supportive community life, helping to nurture positive relationships among the community.
- Influence culture, working actively with other religious groups, or organisations with shared values, to coordinate a faith response on key issues; for example, the sanctity of human life and being the voice of the voiceless.

In his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation on the joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis shared his vision for parish life as a centre for evangelisation:

“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.”

Taking into account the feedback from the consultation, experience in our parishes and insights from elsewhere, we have identified three priorities for focused action:

1. Leadership focused on mission and service.
2. Our young Church nurtured and inspired.
3. Church beyond walls.

2.1 LEADERSHIP FOCUSED ON MISSION AND SERVICE:

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” - Ephesians 4:11-12

Leadership was central to the ministry of Jesus. He took the time to call and form a group of leaders as the foundations on which to build the Church.

Leadership is a foundation of parish life and an essential part in leading change to renew parishes and enable them to become more missionary. The growth and vitality of our worshipping communities relies on leaders, clergy and lay, working together.

Leaders enable others in the community to engage their God-given gifts and talents to build up the Church, raise up new leaders and joyfully live out Christ’s mission in service of others.

Leadership should reflect the diversity of our communities; women, men, the young, the old, and people of different backgrounds should all be represented in shaping the mission-focused community. Leadership teams are a critical support to sustaining a vision and culture of missionary discipleship, implementing concrete plans and discerning future priorities.

“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” - 1 Peter 5:2-3

2.2 OUR YOUNG CHURCH NURTURED AND INSPIRED:

“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 prepackaged 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.’” Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit* (2019)
Our younger faithful hold the key to our future. It is they who will, or may not, pass on the Faith to future generations.

As a Diocese, we are graced with many young people at different stages of life and faith. However, a key concern raised throughout our consultations over the last two years is how to engage with young people and allow them to participate fully in the life of the Church; their presence is often felt to be missing from our churches.

There are more young people in our Catholic schools than regular Mass-goers, of all ages, in our churches. A strategy for schools in our Diocese, *That They May Have Life*, has been developed in collaboration with our Catholic schools and is reflected in our Mission Plan. Our schools and parishes are interdependent, and in order to realise our vision and mission they must jointly form the nucleus of our missionary communities.

Despite this focus on schools, it is important to remember that youth spans many different stages of life; from early childhood to young adulthood and the world of work and, sometimes, starting a family.

A culture of vocation enables young people to experience encouragement and support to consider and make choices about the future, and the future of the Church. An authentic culture of vocation should be integrated at all levels in our Catholic schools and in our parish communities. An early priority in our Mission Plan is to listen to and involve young people in the development of our mission-focused communities.

“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” - 1 Timothy 4:12

2.3 CHURCH BEYOND WALLS:

Works of mercy, love and charity are an essential element in the formation and expression of Christian discipleship which manifests ways people can reach out well beyond the walls of the church to serve and share

the Good News with those on the margins, work with other Christian denominations and promote the care for our common home in our local setting.

“if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” - 1 Corinthians 13:1

The Mission of the Church is never insular or self-centred, but always seeks to go out to those on the margins and share the Good News with them. By working in unison our communities become both welcoming and truly missionary. This also means recognising, enabling, and celebrating the gifts of a diverse and multicultural community of faith.

A Church that realises the commission to “glorify the Lord by our lives” is a Church which reaches out to people in their time of need, at home and overseas. There are many examples to inspire us throughout the Gospels, the history of the Church, and indeed our Diocese today. Our hope is that outreach will be a cornerstone of each missionary community in our Diocese.

“In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: ‘Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest’”. Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* (2015)

Stewardship for our common home and responding to the call of Laudato Si is a priority for us all. Playing our part in addressing environmental concerns is a fundamental aspect of the way we care for those on the margins and provides new opportunities for engagement as well as enabling us to be visible in the wider world.

“The credibility of the Christian message would be much greater if Christians could overcome their divisions and the Church could realize ‘the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her children who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her’ We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God’s face.” Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013)

The positive experience of working with other Christians was a theme throughout our consultations. Fellow Christians from other traditions are facing similar challenges and working together will enable us to share experiences, learn from each other and better reach the world beyond the Church to share the Gospel Message.

“It has been a great experience and I have felt my contributions have been listened to and heard. I’ve enjoyed learning from council members, we’ve debated, researched, presented, prayed and laughed together. I am more aware of the problems our church faces and seen how the council are working together to make sure

no-one is left behind. I'd recommend more young people get involved.”- Emma (Young person from Waterlooville Parish, Havant Evangelisation Team)

ACTION PLAN:

ACTION FOR MISSIONARY COMMUNITIES	PASTORAL AREA	DIOCESE	LEAD COORDINATOR	PHASE
Discern & develop local mission plan to address the principles and priorities of the You Will Be My Witnesses Mission Plan.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Discern who may have a calling to leadership through prayer and assessment of personal qualities & gifts.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Establish Evangelisation Strategy Team, to include school leaders, university chaplains and at least two people aged 16-30.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Provide opportunities for lay leaders to meet and share learning.	●	●	Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Establish a Diocesan Youth Council, comprising at least 12 people aged 16-30, meeting at least twice a year.		●	Episcopal Vicar for Education	Phase 1
Develop and promote JPPI Award Programme.	●	●	Episcopal Vicar for Education & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
<i>Provide age-appropriate opportunities for involvement in parish life and the wider Church.</i>	●		<i>Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
<i>Develop a vocation exploration programme to run across schools and parishes.</i>		●	<i>Episcopal Vicar for Education & Head of Department for Vocation</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
<i>Coordinate & promote local, national and international opportunities for young Catholics to come together.</i>		●	<i>Episcopal Vicar for Education</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Identify and enable shared opportunities for mission and charity between school and church communities.	●	●	Episcopal Vicar for Education & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
<i>Establish Youth Social Action enterprise enabling young people to engage in outreach.</i>		●	<i>Head of Caritas</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Address the question “What does poverty mean in this pastoral area?” and reflect in the local Mission Plan.	●	●	Head of Caritas & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Define and implement a strategy for Caritas; including funding streams.		●	Head of Caritas	Phase 1
Establish Charitable Outreach Ambassadors network		●	Head of Caritas	Phase 1
Establish a forum for planning and mutual support between local outreach groups and projects.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Participate in joint service and mission to the wider local community through Churches Together.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
<i>Participate in providing a faith response on key issues by actively working with other religious groups e.g. end of life, support for refugees, etc.</i>		●	<i>Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>

“To live without faith, without a patrimony to defend, without a steady struggle for truth – that is not living, but existing” - Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati

ACTION FOR MISSIONARY COMMUNITIES	PASTORAL AREA	DIOCESE	LEAD COORDINATOR	PHASE
Continue to develop our ecclesiastical partnership with the Archdiocese of Bamenda, especially with our schools.		●	Portsmouth Bamenda Committee & Episcopal Vicar for Education	Phase 1
Develop Diocesan Environmental Strategy.		●	Head of Caritas	Phase 1
Establish Care for Common Home Ambassadors network.		●	Head of Caritas	Phase 1
<i>Communicate Care for our Common Home and share resources to encourage change.</i>	●		<i>Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Provide more extensive Ananias Training to assist lay faithful in engaging in evangelising conversations.		●	Pre-Discipleship Team	Phase 1
Identify opportunities to develop better visibility and collaboration with local civic institutions.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
<i>Engage with the wider community through outreach in shopping centres, hotels, insititutions, transport nodes, etc.</i>	●	●	<i>Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator & Evangelisation Strategy Teams</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Develop and implement a communications plan to increase visibility and accessibility and to broadcast Good News.	●	●	Head of Communications & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Ensure that all communications local and diocesan are user-friendly for newcomers or the uninitiated.	●	●	Head of Communications & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Provide a support framework for establishing local outreach projects.		●	Head of Caritas	Phase 1
<i>Establish a forum to bring together outreach groups and projects from across the Diocese.</i>		●	<i>Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Develop pastoral metrics to support the development and evaluation of local mission plans.		●	Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation& Chief Operating Officer	Phase 1
<i>Evaluate impact of outreach projects and discern what to cease, adapt, or develop.</i>	●	●	<i>Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation, Head of Caritas & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>

Further suggestions & examples:

- Appoint Charitable Outreach Ambassador .
- Age-appropriate activities: Children’s Liturgy, holiday clubs, altar service, outreach projects, fundraising, etc.
- Establish an SVP society.
- Opportunities for young Catholics to come together: Lourdes pilgrimage, World Youth Day, etc.
- Create opportunities to welcome and involve students in parish life.
- Outreach groups and projects: Caritas, SVP, Churches Together, CAFOD, etc.
- Appoint Care for Common Home Ambassador.
- Consider promoting initiatives such as Street Pastors.

3. PRUDENT STEWARDS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

MAKING WISE CHOICES TO LEAVE A SUSTAINABLE LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS:

[The call to mission] “demands that the historical parish institution not remain a prisoner of immobility or of a worrisome pastoral repetition but rather it should put into action that outgoing dynamism that through collaboration among different parish communities and a reinforced communion among clergy and laity will orient itself effectively towards an evangelising mission...” The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church (2020)

The Lord, in his generosity, has bestowed on us many gifts with which to carry out His mission of evangelisation. These include our communities and the gifts of our people, clergy, religious and lay men, and women: employed and volunteers, who give their lives, talents, charisms, vocations, faith, experience, and time.

They also include our temporal resources, which faithful past and present have contributed to our Diocese and parish communities. Temporal resources include our property, buildings, savings, income, and other financial resources. They support pastoral care and missionary initiatives, the training and employment of staff, maintenance of adequate facilities, the material support for our priests and seminarians, and financial support for

the life and mission of the Church nationally and internationally.

Our model of stewardship for our resources, time, talent, treasure, and other gifts is the prudent and balanced one we find in Scripture. Prudent stewardship is needed to ensure that our Mission Plan is effectively resourced and brings the Church in our Diocese to a sustainable position for a vibrant future.

As we plan for the future in this time of particular challenge, we want to avoid two extreme positions that can be taken with regard to these resources. One, is to place undue reliance upon them as if more money, employees, and bureaucracy were the answer to every problem. The other, is to treat the need for structure, temporal resources and a paid workforce as irrelevant to mission, as pertaining only to the 'secular world' and characterising a proper focus on their use, as evidence of a lack of trust in divine providence. Neither of these positions is proper to the Christian view.

Mission demands people and resources to carry out God's work which is why attention must be given to the stewardship of the temporal goods of the Church. This Plan, while emphasising the overriding priorities of missionary communities centred on Christ, is also intended to assist the many parishes that have declining participation and ever-scarcer resources, which impedes their ability to fully enter into the mission to which Christ calls them.

We are called to spiritual revitalisation and new ways of organising ourselves for God's mission. As Pope Francis has stressed, ecclesial renewal must be shaped by "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." Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013)

Go Out and Bear Fruit, envisaged the establishment of pastoral areas; units of parishes working together with the aim of eventually becoming one. Today, our parishes are at many different stages of the journey. Some are still working as individual small units; others are working together in certain respects, and a few have reached the stage of bringing together a number of parishes into one. The few parishes who have completed the path envisaged in Go Out and Bear Fruit are among our most resilient and sustainable today.

Each area is unique and will be starting the journey with a different set of strengths and challenges. It is understood that pastoral areas will move through the plan at different paces; with some ready to become single parishes within the next 2-3 years and all pastoral areas becoming unified parishes within the next 10 years. Irrespective of the structural pace of change, all areas should develop clear plans for the mission priorities set out in this plan.

If we are successful, our communities will be able to reach out effectively and confidently to those yet to hear

the message of the Gospel, and to plan for the life and faith of generations to come. Our estate will have been carefully pruned to enable resources to be released for mission and service appropriate to local circumstances long into the future.

Working on a larger scale at parish level will enable our parishes to benefit from the ministry of a team of priests and deacons and draw from a larger pool of volunteers sharing their gifts and talents. Shared resources provide potential opportunities to employ people in key roles, for example youth ministry, which would otherwise be unaffordable as small single parishes.

There will be efficiencies from sharing resources and reduced bureaucracy, and most importantly released time and talents for wider ministry across the parish communities, schools. Universities, prisons, and hospitals. We will also be able to invest in inspiring liturgical churches, welcoming halls and our presbyteries will offer a good standard of accommodation to our priests.

Our Mission Plan includes three areas for action to support our renewal and principle of being good stewards of Christ's Church:

1. Reshaped structures.
2. Prudent stewardship of our resources.
3. Investing for the future.

3.1 RESHAPED STRUCTURES:

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go”
- Joshua 1:9

In many cases, new parish structures will be needed to ensure that our communities have strong foundations and are able to be faithful to the mission of Jesus, better connected to one another, and sustainably resourced for generations to come.

Some areas are already single parishes, for example Jersey, St Peter & the Winchester Martyrs, and St Swithun Wells. On publication of this Mission Plan, 24 pastoral or single parish areas will form the structure for the future, incorporating the current 87 parishes. Over the next ten years it is expected that 24 canonical parishes will form the shape of the Diocese.

The amalgamation into single parishes will occur in phases and as organically as possible. Each parish amalgamation will require the necessary canonical procedures to be followed.

The outcome will yield two ‘types’ of parish, with their associated schools:

- A parish with all the clergy living at one church going out to serve communities within the parish.
- A parish which is a ‘community of communities,’ with a Parish Priest (PP) and perhaps an Assistant

Priest (AP) living at one church, and Father(s)- or Priest(s)-in-Charge (pic) living in one or more of these communities.

Over time and with the transfers of clergy, the models may develop, and for instance, a type two parish might eventually become a type one.

Our school structures will also be reshaped. We will seek the best option to ensure a sustainable future for our Catholic schools in line with changing government policy and our Schools Strategy That They May Have Life.

PRUDENT STEWARDSHIP OF OUR RESOURCES:

“Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, so that it may bear more fruit” - John 15:2

Courageous choices and rigorous planning will be needed to steward our estate and financial resources and ensure future resilience as we work together to navigate the challenges yet to come.

Legacy debt must be repaid and the financial burden across the Diocese, both centrally and in parishes, eased by encouraging committed giving, through wise investments, creative fundraising, the prudent allocation of budgets, and releasing resources from our estate; we must discern carefully what to renew, and what to dispose of.

INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE:

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” - Isaiah 43:19

To realise all our ambitions, we must ensure that our Mission Plan is effectively resourced. Our retained estate cared for so that it is in good condition and appropriately developed and surplus assets ethically invested for our future sustainability. We must also consider investment in new technology in service of the mission of the Church.

“I am hugely impressed with the calibre of all the members, their talents and their commitment. It is wonderful to see our priests standing with their people.”
Alison (Havant and Emsworth Parish, Havant Rationalisation and Consolidation Team)

ACTION PLAN

ACTION FOR PRUDENT STEWARDS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH	PASTORAL AREA	DIOCESE	LEAD COORDINATOR	PHASE
Discern & develop local plan to address the principles and priorities of the You Will Be My Witnesses Mission Plan.			Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Formalise new pastoral area and deanery structure & appoint clergy leaders.		●	Bishop Philip	Phase 1
Establish Pastoral Area Transitional Finance Committee.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Develop resources and guidance for local leadership structures.		●	Trust Development Manager	Phase 1
<i>Establish working groups to focus on delivering particular aspects of the Mission Plan.</i>	●		<i>Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
<i>Determine resources and coaching for pastoral area leadership teams.</i>		●	<i>Vicar for Clergy & Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Define the canonical process to follow to establish new parishes.		●	Bishop's Council & Council of Priests	Phase 1
Develop a financial strategy to deliver our Mission Plan; allocating resources to our priorities and returning to financial good health.		●	Director of Finance & Board of Trustees	Phase 1
Develop pastoral area budget and long-term financial strategy.	●		Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Develop Diocesan Investment Committee.		●	Board of Trustees	Phase 1
Develop an estate management plan for each pastoral area and the Diocese as a whole.	●	●	Head of Estates & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Implement up to date technology to improve communication, productivity and efficiency across key functions, e.g. finance, estate, & fundraising.	●	●	Chief Operating Officer & Parish Priest or Pastoral Area Coordinator	Phase 1
Develop a diocesan fundraising strategy, including provision of training for local fundraisers.		●	Head of Communications & Fundraising	Phase 1
<i>Develop a strategic development plan for the long-term sustainability of the Cathedral.</i>		●	<i>Dean of the Cathedral & Chapter of Canons</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
<i>Reshape paid workforce to reflect the development of larger parishes and effectively support delivery of the Mission Plan, including curial functions.</i>		●	<i>Chief Operating Officer</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Determine appropriate structure for Catholic schools in the context of contemporary government policy,		●	Episcopal Vicar for Education	Phase 1

“let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus” - Hebrews 12:1-2

MILESTONES:

October 2023 - December 2023

Evangelisation Strategy Teams and Transitional Finance Committees are established in each Pastoral Area.

January 2024

Notification of dates for visits from Bishop Philip.

28 March 2024

(or with the agreement of Bishop Philip, June 2024)

Local plans, indicating areas of focus for mission, an outline estate plan, and local milestones towards amalgamation of parishes (where this has not yet been completed) sent to Bishop for review and approval.

July 2024 - July 2025

Bishop Philip visits each Pastoral Area/Amalgamated Parish to discuss local plans.

July 2025

Most Pastoral Areas begin the canonical process to amalgamate parishes.

September 2025 - June 2026

Bishop Philip's visits focus those areas working through the canonical process amalgamation and those parishes already unified parishes needing to develop other aspects Mission Plan.

September 2026 - November 2026

Formal review of the Mission Plan implementation undertaken by local areas and all key diocesan groups

to share learning and adjust the plan as needed prior to Phase 2.

December 2026
Start of Phase 2.

July 2029
Remaining Pastoral Areas begin the canonical process to amalgamate parishes.

September 2029
Start of Phase 3.

September 2029 - December 2029
Period of reflection to information of the future Mission Plan, beyond 2033.

“This is a powerful summons to all of us. You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision, you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today’s world.” - Pope Francis in *Gaudete et Exultate* (2018)

CALL TO YOU:

Habits to help you to develop a deep relationship with the Lord:

1. Keep Sunday special, as a family day, by attending Mass, the 'source and summit' of the Christian supporting your parish community.
2. Spend at least five minutes a day in prayer, at whatever time you find best, using the Scriptures, maybe the Gospel of the day.
3. Keep Friday as a day of penance in honour of the Lord's Passion, intentionally serving the poor and needy.
4. Pay a private visit to church for a short period of prayer before the Tabernacle, at least once a fortnight.
5. Go to Confession once a month or so, like a spiritual check-up when you can personally experience God's love and mercy.
6. Join a small group for formation, prayer and fellowship, where you can share with others your own faith-experience and in turn hear what God is doing in the lives of others.

A CALL TO YOU:

The renewal of the Church cannot simply be the responsibility of the Diocese, the parish priest, or the Bishop. It is dependent on the active generous participation and spiritual commitment of each individual believer. Structural changes will fail without a deep, personal change in ourselves, in our families and in our communities.

Each and every one of us is called to discipleship, everyone has a unique part to play in God's plan. *You Will Be My Witnesses* is an invitation for every person and family, every parish and school across our Diocese to respond according to the gifts and talents that has been given them, and so that a legacy of renewal will inspire future generations.

RENEWAL:

PRAYER FOR THE RENEWAL OF OUR DIOCESE:

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, we beg you to change us, to convert us and to make us holy. Fill us with a deeper faith, hope and love for you. Send into our hearts the cleansing fire of the Holy Spirit and powerfully renew all the clergy, religious and laity of our Diocese. Unite us in love and respect for one another and unify us as your one, holy people. Grant us a new passion and zeal for the Catholic Faith, for mission, outreach and service. Help us to proclaim your Gospel generously to the poor and needy that many more souls may be saved by finding their way to you in your Church. May Mary Immaculate help us. May St Edmund of Abingdon and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati pray for us.

Amen.