



**TOWARDS  
A VISION  
FOR  
THE DIOCESE**

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## PART I

### TOWARDS A VISION FOR THE DIOCESE

#### Introduction

- i. This paper is a step in a process. It follows on other meetings, not least the gatherings of priests and the diocesan Eucharistic Day. We live in times of change which present new opportunities and new difficulties. The most obvious challenge is that in the next few years we will have fewer priests and so it will be difficult to sustain the level and nature of pastoral provision that we have had over the last 50 or 60 years. It is a situation we must address and dioceses in the country are approaching it in different ways. This is because situations vary so much from one part of the country to another. In some cities in the North of England, the English, Irish and Scots who were the backbone of the inner-city parishes are no longer there and big decisions have to be made about closures and amalgamations. Here it is somewhat different. Our parishes in South London are vibrant multicultural communities, but providing sufficient priests is increasingly difficult. In Kent we are also feeling the shortage, especially, for example, in the maintenance of Mass centres. **This stage in the process is an invitation to everyone in the diocese to reflect on how we can use, share and develop our resources in a changed situation.** But I want it to be a positive and creative process. We must not allow our view of the Church to be shaped by the gloomy picture that the media sometimes portray. It is false and fails to recognise that every age in the Church has its blessings and its challenges.
- ii. This paper proposes elements of a vision for the diocese. That is followed by proposals for a process of reflection throughout the diocese. Finally, there are some facts and figures for us to keep in mind. I suggest that we need to discern at local level, probably in the deaneries, the kinds of collaboration and coordination that makes best use of our resources while also building up the life and mission of the Church. Decisions of various kinds will have to be made as time goes on but this process can give an opportunity for people to make their contribution and reflect together. Most importantly, this process involves putting our situation before God in prayer and asking for His wisdom and blessing.
- iii. A vision for the future of the diocese needs both depth and breadth. It also needs to be rooted in the history and culture of the diocese and the present

realities that are our challenges and opportunities. It should not be too “parochial” or inward looking but neither should it prescind from the problems and dilemmas that face the diocese today. In seeking to present a vision, I would want to distinguish between the bigger picture and the smaller, more local picture. They are entirely connected and should feed into one another. I hope that what follows will be a help and stimulus for our reflection.

### **A Global Perspective**

- iv. For the broader picture, I would refer to two quotations from the Second Vatican Council which are very well known but would seem to me to sum up the self-understanding of the Catholic Church in the modern world. One is the beginning of *Gaudium et Spes*:

“The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.”

The Church is in the world and part of it. We do not live in a different world from that of all our fellow men and women. Since the Council the world has become a smaller place, a “global village” and the Church is at the heart of it. Hence my second quotation which is from the beginning of *Lumen Gentium*, which describes the Church as “in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and unity among all people.” **Because of the presence of the Church in the world, we know in faith that there is the possibility of a personal and communal relationship with God for all people and, therefore, of the deepest bonds of communion between men and women.**

- v. I propose these quotations since they should be a source of pride, of confidence and of peace. They tell us who and what we are. They should be a stimulus to outreach: to mission, to dialogue, to charity and to justice.

### **The Lessons of our History**

- vi. Our vision must also be for this particular diocese which came into being with the reestablishment of the hierarchy in 1850. Yet, our Catholic history goes back much further than that. It was to the shores of our diocese that St Augustine came, a missionary sent here by Pope St Gregory the Great. St John Fisher, one of the greatest English saints and martyrs was a bishop in this diocese. It so

happens that as I prepare these reflections I am also preparing for a visit to the Thanet deanery and for a Mass in honour of St Mildred. We have a Benedictine convent in Minster whose origins go back to the seventh century. St Mildred became the second abbess of Minster in 695. She was abbess for thirty years and when she was dying, the community asked her to say some words of farewell that they could remember her by. What she said strikes me as being as relevant in our diocese today as it clearly was then.

“Be at peace among yourselves and be holy. Keep the love of God and your neighbour with all steadfastness. As is fitting for the house of God, see to the needs of all the community, listen to your superiors, be careful of your discernment, bear one another’s burdens, obey one another, yielding to each other. Be one body and one spirit in the Lord, forming one household of God. And may the God of peace and love remain with you always.”

Being united and working together are especially important today. The times require us to share our resources and to “yield” to one another. But to what purpose? What are we seeking to do and to be as the local Church of Southwark today?

- vii. We are not engaged in creating a new Church but in discerning how to receive, hand on, and take forward the gift which is the Church. Any plans or strategies that we develop must be the fruit of a return to the one source of life and wisdom, namely, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and saviour of the world. To find our bearings we must return to the New Testament and to its witness and teaching about Christ and about the Church. The Scriptures speak a language of new life that grows out of darkness and suffering. That is the language we need to speak. I propose some passages and some images to lead and guide us.

### **Christ at the Centre**

- viii. One is the picture of the crucifixion of Jesus with John and Mary at the foot of the cross. Blood and water flowed from the side of Christ and the Church sees this picture as revealing to us that Christ is the source of the life for the world. That picture also tells us that what we are about today is seeking to draw life afresh from the unquenchable spring of life that is Christ. It speaks directly to our own spiritual lives and to our mission. Christ is the Son of God and through the waters of baptism we become sons and daughters of God. Our faith, our hope

- and our love must be focussed on Christ, our Risen Lord. We cannot prescind from the particularity of our Christian faith. Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life and our mission is to communicate that Truth to all humanity since it is the Truth for all humanity.
- ix. Two other pictures follow on logically and naturally from the scene at the cross. One, of course, is Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of the Risen Lord – was poured out upon Our Lady and the apostles. This created a completely new life and a completely new kind of human unity which St Paul described as “communion in the Holy Spirit”. In the power of the Spirit the apostles preached the message of Christ the Risen Lord and baptised those who put their faith in Him. Thus the Church came into being.
- x. The *Acts of the Apostles* gives a beautiful vision of the Church:
- “These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.”  
(*Acts 2: 42*)
- And,
- “The whole group of believers was united heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, and everything they owned was held in common.” (*Acts 4: 32*)
- xi. The word “brotherhood” in the above text translates the Greek word *koinonia* which we translate as communion. Literally the word “communion” means shared participation in a single reality. **It is clear that St Paul understood the Church as the body of those who participated together in the Holy Spirit.** Hence his famous greeting at the end of the second letter to the Corinthians: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

### **Growing in Communion**

- xii. *Koinonia*, I suggest, is fundamental for our vision of Church. I propose it, too, as a way of understanding whatever groupings, movements, or associations we may belong to and also as a guiding principle for discussions and processes that grapple with issues of development and change. It also tells us what we are trying to nurture together – deeper communion in the Holy Spirit. I would connect *koinonia* with a secure guideline for planning for the future in the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, “*Novo Millennio Ineunte*” when he says:

“Dear brothers and sisters, our Christian communities must become *genuine ‘schools’ of prayer*, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly ‘falls in love’. Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God’s plan.”

It is the Holy Spirit that makes prayer possible and our purpose should be to open our hearts and minds to God in prayer and to foster and develop communities which are “schools” of prayer.

- xiii. One other feature of the picture of the early Church should also be part of our vision for the future. The text speaks of “the breaking of bread” which is clearly a reference to the Eucharist. **This is the most fundamental thing of all and the celebration of the liturgy – the centre and culmination of Christian life – is the supreme occasion of communion in the Holy Spirit when the Spirit comes upon the bread and wine and they become the Body and Blood of the Lord.** We participate in that food together thus becoming the Church in its fullest and deepest expression.

### Reaching Out

- xiv. Belonging to the Church is not an inward looking thing. Crucially, we must reach in mission to all those who seem deaf to the call of the Gospel and whose lives are shaped by materialism, consumerism and scepticism about faith. As I indicated at the beginning, we must have a broad perspective and open and generous hearts. A Christian cannot but be concerned with the poor, the marginalised and the victims of the terrible conflicts and injustice that scar our world. All that must come within our concern. So should our ecumenical outreach and it is important to insist that ecumenical commitment is an integral part of our understanding of the Church. Despite serious and deep-seated differences we remain bonded in a unique way with all the baptised. Sadly, it is only the bad news in ecumenism that makes the headlines but much good is being done and remains to be done. We have no permission to withdraw from the search for full communion of faith and sacramental life among all the baptised *for the sake of the Church’s mission to the world.*

- xv. Likewise, we must reach out to members of other religions recognising that the same Spirit is at work in the lives of members of other religions in ways that we cannot articulate. It is important always to remember that ecumenical dialogue and interreligious dialogue go hand in hand with evangelisation. In both contexts we proclaim our faith in its fullness and look for the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those to whom we reach out.
- xvi. A spirit of openness and receptivity is vital within the communion of the Catholic Church. We must be inclusive of different spiritualities and different gifts. Most importantly for the flourishing of this diocese, we must be inclusive of the rich cultural and ethnic diversity that characterises so much of our diocese. This is a genuine blessing and it must figure significantly in any plans for the future. We need on the one hand to celebrate the specific gifts of the different groups that are in our parishes and on the other hand to draw people together in a new and enhanced experience of Catholicity that is a gift for our times. And our Christian faith must inevitably lead us to reach out to the poor, the suffering, the marginalised.

### **Facing the Future**

- xvii. All this needs to figure in our minds and imagination if we are to be true to our calling as we think about changes in structures and organisation in the diocese. The next section of this paper will outline a process of consultation that I hope will help all of us to take ownership of the present situation and to identify the context for future developments. Here I would simply indicate some principles that derive from the vision I have sought to present. We need to be open-minded *and creative*. We may need to think not simply in terms of our own parish but of the wider community, particularly, I suggest, the deanery. Already in some places parishes are sharing resources in areas like sacramental preparation. It may be that the deployment of clergy and the availability of the Eucharist will undergo change, but this should not be an occasion for alarm or concern. But it is important to remember that the present style and level of pastoral provision is of quite recent origin. In the three centuries following the Reformation, the communion and mission of the Church was lived out in a very different way from the parish structures that developed after 1850. The future will be different and, crucially, will be characterised by greater involvement and collaboration among all the baptised - lay and ordained - all who are in full communion with the Church. The gifts and the ideas of all need to be

recognised, affirmed and nurtured. We will also need adjustment and formation for a changed situation. But the Lord is with us and the future is in his hands. Above all, we must pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and, instead of composing a prayer, I suggest that, before all we do in the time ahead, we pray together the great prayer of St Paul from the letter to the Ephesians:

“Out of his infinite glory, may God give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and length, the height and depth; until knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.” (*Eph.3:16-19*)

God wants each one of us to find life in his Son, Jesus Christ. He wants us to belong to that communion in the Holy Spirit that finds its fullest expression in the Eucharist. He wants us to evangelise and to manifest the truth of the Gospel in the way we live - and how desperate is the need for the Good News we bear. Let us be relaxed, open, yielding, generous and courageous as we follow the calling of the Lord in new times and new circumstances. We must be open to the Holy Spirit and in this let us take Our Lady as our model and guide. She was filled with the Holy Spirit and remained open in faith to a future that was beyond her understanding. Let us say with Mary: “Let it be done unto me according to your word.”

## PART II THE CONSULTATION

### Objective

The Objective of the Consultation is to review the provision of pastoral care in the Archdiocese so that as a diocese (i.e. as parishes, communities, schools etc...) we can continue, with renewed faith and hope, Christ's evangelising mission.

### Process

The process will include clergy, laity and religious at a diocesan level, but especially at a local parish and deanery level. The participation of those involved in pastoral care and providing pastoral care (priests, chaplains, deacons, religious) will be very important.

**The focus of the process will be a reflection on three key themes:**

- **Growing in Communion**
- **Reaching out in Mission**
- **Facing the Future/Possibilities for Pastoral Provision**

The basis for reflection on these three themes will be Archbishop Kevin's paper *Towards a Vision for the Diocese*. Each theme is important and needs adequate time for reflection and discussion. The proposal is for a meeting of a little over an hour on each theme and the suggested outline for such a meeting is:

- Opening Prayer and reflection on Scripture
- Presentation of the topic..... 5 or 6 minutes
- Personal reflection on Archbishop Kevin's paper... 5 minutes
- Sharing and discussion..... 50 minutes
- Summing up..... 5 minutes

### Timetable for Reflection Meetings

- Deanery Meetings for the clergy on the themes 'Growing in Communion' and 'Reaching out in Mission'... October to February
- Deanery Meeting for clergy on the theme 'Facing the Future/Possibilities for Pastoral Provision'... Lent 2007
- Meetings for laity in parishes on the themes: 'Growing in Communion', 'Reaching out in Mission', 'Facing the Future/Possibilities for Pastoral Provision'... Lent 2007
- Meetings for Religious..... Lent 2007
- A meeting for representative clergy, laity and religious for each parish in the deanery to collate feedback and responses as a deanery..... End of April 2007
- Letter from Archbishop Kevin, drawing things together and looking to the future

## GROWING IN COMMUNION

### 1. Opening Prayer

God our loving Father, pour out on us afresh the gifts of your Holy Spirit. Open our ears to hear your Word, open our eyes to see your presence, open our minds to understand your Wisdom and open our hearts to be more available for your mission so that strengthened by your grace we can truly be a sign and instrument of your presence in our world today. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Scripture Reading

“These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

### Reading

“*Koinonia*, I suggest, is fundamental for our vision of Church. I propose it, too, as a way of understanding whatever groups, movements or associations we may belong to and also as a guiding principle for discussions and processes that grapple with issues of development and change. It also tells us what we are trying to nurture together – deeper communion in the Holy Spirit...

...One other feature of the picture of the early Church should also be part of our vision for the future. The text speaks of “the breaking of the bread” which is clearly a reference to the Eucharist. *This is the most fundamental thing of all and the celebration of the Liturgy – the centre and culmination of Christian life – is the supreme occasion of communion in the Holy Spirit when the Spirit comes upon the bread and wine and they become the Body and Blood of the Lord. We participate in that good together, thus becoming the Church in its fullest and deepest expression.’ (Towards a Vision for the Diocese, n.13)*

### 2. Personal Reflection

### **3. Questions for Discussion**

- i. What are the most important elements in developing the life of the parish? Which have been most effective – what is it that makes you feel that you belong to your parish/deanery/diocese? Why?
  
- ii. What are the key challenges we encounter in developing communion and unity in the parish/deanery/diocese? How can we best respond to these challenges?
  
- iii.* From the vision of the Church as communion, what priorities emerge for our parish/deanery/diocese? What implications do they have for the way we work with each other?
  
- iv. What resources, ministries and activities can we identify to bring these priorities into reality? (e.g. Liturgy? Catechesis? Ecclesial Movements? Movements that promote marriage and family life? Shared commitment to justice, peace and pro-life movements? Ethnic Associations/Chaplaincies?)

### **4. Summing Up**

### **5. Closing Prayer**

## REACHING OUT IN MISSION

### 1. Opening Prayer

God our loving Father, pour out on us afresh the gifts of your Holy Spirit. Open our ears to hear your Word, open our eyes to see your presence, open our minds to understand your Wisdom and open our hearts to be more available for your mission so that strengthened by your grace we can truly be a sign and instrument of your presence in our world today. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Scripture Reading

“The church in Jerusalem heard about this and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. There he could see for himself that God had given grace and this pleased him and he urged them all to remain faithful to the Lord with heartfelt devotion: for he was a good man filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith and a large number of people were won over to the Lord....One day while they were offering worship to the Lord and keeping a fast, the Holy Spirit said, ‘I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them.’ So it was that after fasting and prayer they laid hands on them and sent them off.” (*Acts 11:22-24, 13:2-3*)

### Reading

“Since the whole Church is missionary and the work of evangelisation is the fundamental task of the People of God, this Sacred Synod invites all to undertake a profound interior renewal so that being vitally conscious of their responsibility for the spread of the Gospel, they might play their part.” (*Vatican II, Decree Ad Gentes on the Church’s Missionary Activity, n.35*)

### 2. Personal Reflection

### **3. Questions for Discussion**

- I. How can we reach out in mission to believers and non-believers? (e.g. Through the workplace, school/college, family, local community, parish). What do we need to empower us to be more effective and confident in that work of evangelization? What particular experiences have helped you? (e.g. CaFE, RCIA, Youth 2000, Parish Missions)
  
- II. Living out communion calls us to be inclusive to all peoples. How do we ensure inclusion of multi-ethnic/cultural, single/married, young/old and people with disabilities within our parishes? How do we celebrate and value the richness each group brings?
  
- III. How do we engage and seek opportunities for dialogue with our neighbours of other faiths?
  
- IV. In what ways do we reach out and show solidarity with those who are in the greatest need in our local area? In what projects or causes are we involved, either as individuals or groups, which promote, for example, justice & peace, the sanctity of life, care of the environment, work with refugees, the homeless?
  
- V. Are there any people in our communities whom we support in a specific apostolate? (e.g. Youth Worker, Pastoral Assistant, Hospital Visitor, Counsellor, Lay Chaplain) What particular initiatives have meant good news for your parish or deanery?

### **4. Summing Up**

### **5. Closing Prayer**

## **FACING THE FUTURE/POSSIBILITIES FOR PASTORAL PROVISION**

### **1. Opening Prayer**

God our loving Father, pour out on us afresh the gifts of your Holy Spirit. Open our ears to hear your Word, open our eyes to see your presence, open our minds to understand your Wisdom and open our hearts to be more available for your mission so that strengthened by your grace we can truly be a sign and instrument of your presence in our world today. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Scripture Reading**

“About this time, the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenists made a complaint against the Hebrews: in the daily distribution their own widows were being overlooked. So the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them, “It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food: you brothers must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom: we will hand over this duty to them and continue to devote ourselves to prayer and the service of the word.” The whole assembly approved of this proposal and elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, together with Philip Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these to the apostles, who prayed and laid hands on them. The word of the Lord continued to spread and the number of disciples in Jerusalem was greatly increased.” (Acts 6:1-7)

### **Reading**

“Here I would simply indicate some principles that derive from the vision I have sought to present. One is that we need to be open-minded. We may need to think not simply in terms of our own parish but of the wider community, particularly perhaps the deanery. Already in some places parishes are sharing resources in areas like sacramental preparation. It may be that the deployment of clergy and the availability of the Eucharist will undergo change, but this should not be an occasion for alarm or concern. It is important to remember that the present style and level of pastoral provision is of quite recent origin. In the three centuries following the Reformation, the communion and mission of the Church was lived out in a very different way from the structures that developed after 1850. The future will be different and crucially, will be characterised by greater involvement and collaboration of all the baptised – lay and ordained – all who are in full communion with the Church. The gifts and ideas of all need to be recognised, affirmed and nurtured. We will need adjustment and formation for a changed situation. But the Lord is with us and the future is in his hands. (*Towards a Vision for the Diocese, n.17*)



## **SOME GUIDANCE FOR MEETINGS**

It may not be possible to address all the questions during a meeting. The important thing is for the group to address the questions that they think are the most important.

It will be important for the chairman to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

The note-taking that accompanies the meeting is very important. Discussions should be summarised onto one side of A4 paper.

In pulling the threads of the discussion together, the note-taker should highlight the following three areas:

- Areas of convergence and agreement.
- Areas of difference.
- Those things that are in need of further development.

## PART III AVAILABILITY OF PRIESTS FOR THE FUTURE

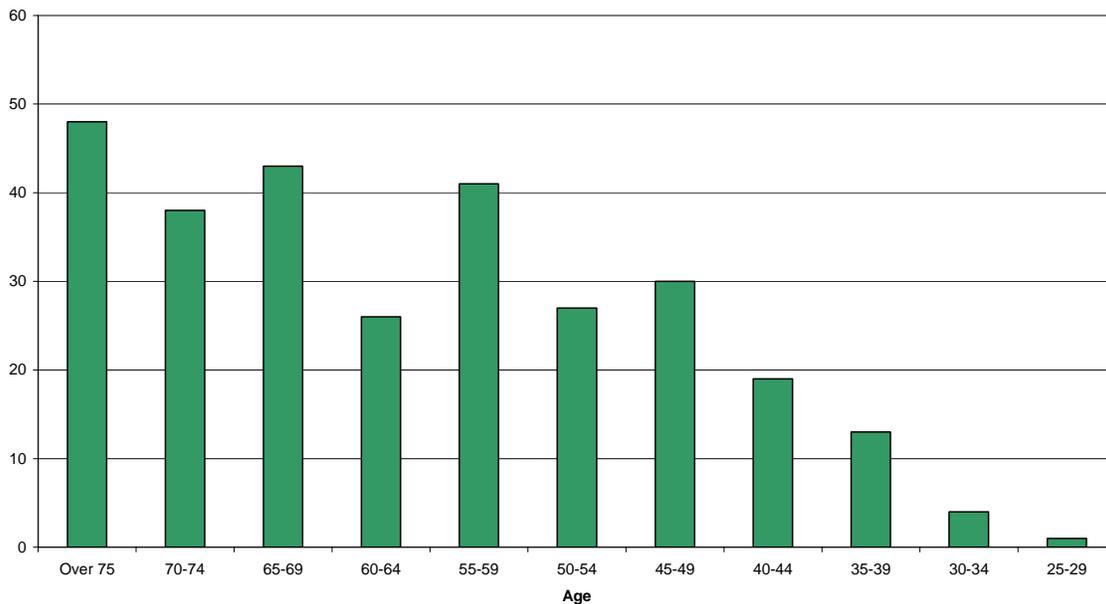
### Diocesan Priests

- i. At present there are 290 Priests of the Diocese. The following table shows the age-ranges and their availability for ministry:

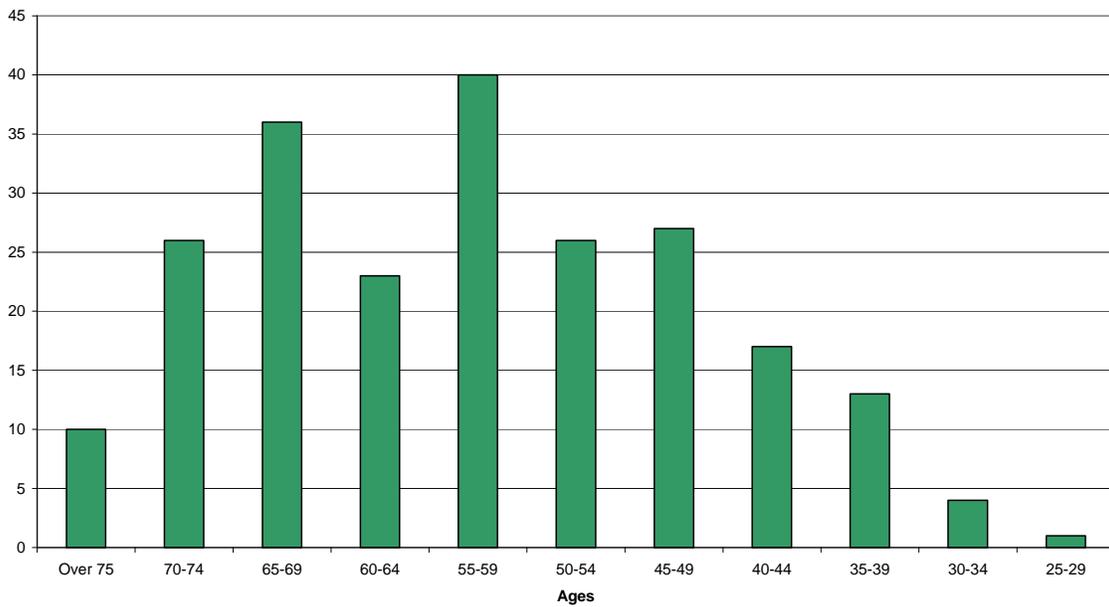
Age	Active	Retired	Unavailable	Total
Over 75	10	38	0	48
70-74	26	12	0	38
65-69	36	6	1	43
60-64	23	2	1	26
55-59	40	0	1	41
50-54	26	0	1	27
45-49	27	0	3	30
40-44	17	0	2	19
35-39	13	0	0	13
30-34	4	0	0	4
25-29	1	0	0	1
Total	223	58	9	290

- ii. These figures produce the following profiles:

Secular Priests by Age as at 6th August 2006



Active Secular Priests as at 6th August 2006

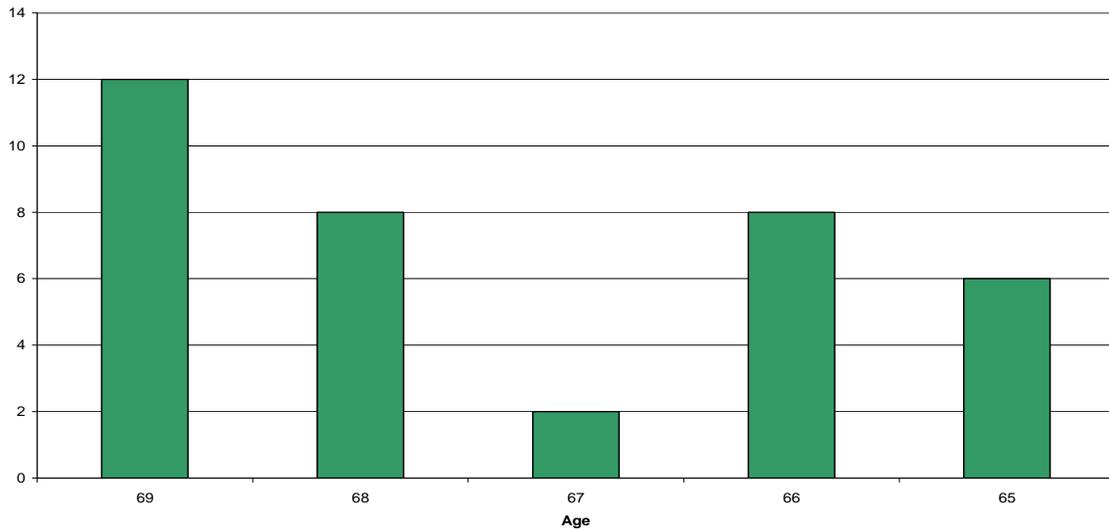


- iii. It can be noted especially from these figures that the numbers of priests under 40 years of age falls away somewhat. This reflects the fact that men are applying for seminary admission later than was once the case.

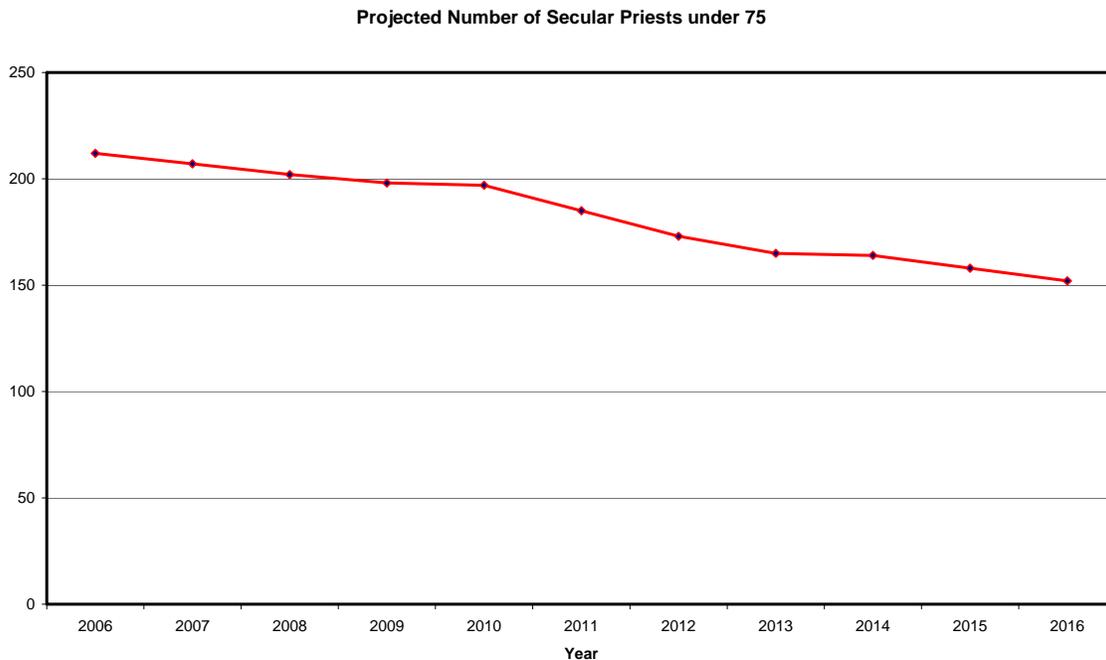
**Future Projections**

- iv. There are two “bulges” in numbers of clergy – those in the later part of the 60’s and those in the later 50’s. It can be predicted, therefore, that there will be two periods of more noticeable pressure, when the upper sixties group reach seventy five and again about ten years later. In this connection, the following chart shows the profile of the first of these two groups in greater detail:

Secular Priests in age range 65 - 69 as at 6th August 2006

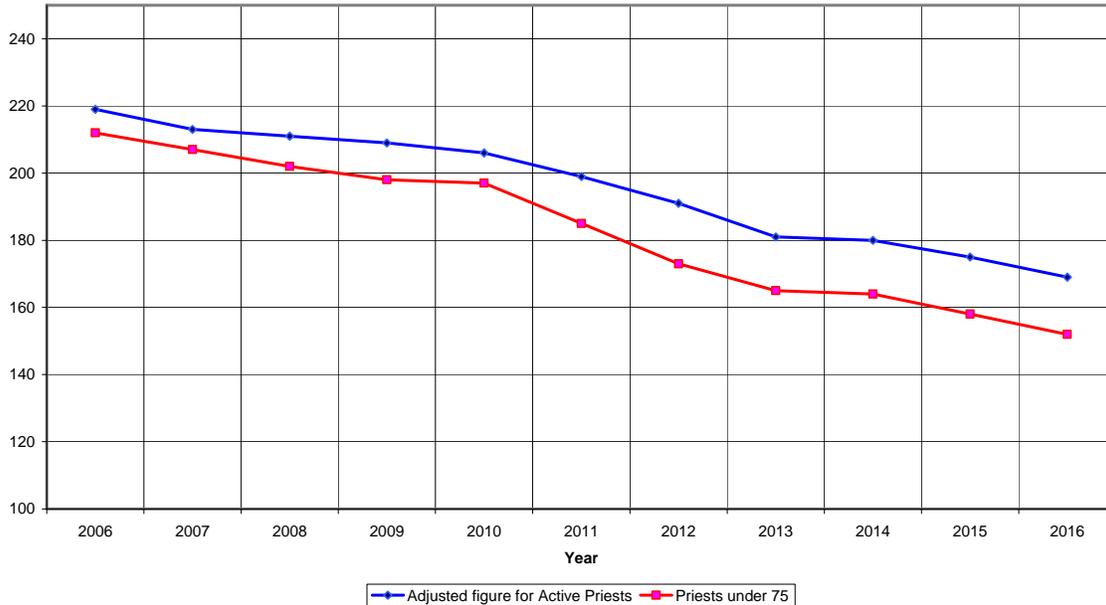


- v. Taking the present number of active priests under the age of 75 and basing a projection on the remote possibility that there are no deaths under that age, that no priest retires early, that nobody decides to leave active ministry and that there are no ordinations, there would be a decline in the number of active priests from 212 to 152 – a decline of 60.



- vi. However, such a prediction would not be well founded. Therefore, the prediction being put forward is based on the following considerations:
- At present, a little over 20% of those priests over the age of 75 are currently continuing in ministry. It is to be hoped that this trend will continue.
  - At present, an average of 2 priests per year retire below the age of 75. It is presumed that under-75 retirements will continue at this level.
  - Over the last 10 years, an average of 2 priests per year have died under the age of 75. These figures are based on this trend continuing.
  - Again, over the last 10 years, an average of 1 priest has left active ministry each year. This consideration is included in the figures also.
  - Looking to the future, and taking into consideration the present number of students in seminary formation (not including those following a propaedeutic year) the average number of ordinations will be 2 per year. This figure has been used in these figures.
- vii. Based on these considerations, it is possible to propose that, over a period of 10 years, the number of active priests would decline from 219 to 169 – a decline of 50.

Projected Number of Secular Priests: 2006-2016



### Parishes in the care of Religious Communities

- viii. The Diocese continues to benefit from the service of a number of religious communities engaged in parish ministry. At present there are 23 parishes of the Diocese in the care of either religious communities or individual members of religious congregations (including those from overseas to which reference is made below). This represents a rise from 18 parishes in 1996.
- ix. In addition, there are a number of religious communities of priests within parishes and these communities also make a valuable contribution to pastoral care. The Carmelite community at Aylesford, in particular, plays an important part in the life of the Diocese.
- x. Clearly, the presence of such communities of religious is a very significant contribution to the life of the Diocese and it is to be hoped that this pattern will continue into the future. The arrival in the Diocese of some more recently founded communities is a sign of hope in this regard.

### Priests from Overseas serving in parishes of the Diocese

- xi. At present there are 24 secular priests from overseas serving in the Diocese. There are 15 priests of Religious Congregations serving in secular parishes, all but three of whom originate from outside England & Wales.
- xii. Particular arrangements are in place for members of three Religious Congregations from overseas: the Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria (5 priests) who are present in four parishes in the Diocese; the Missionary Society of St. Francis Xavier (Pilar Fathers) (3 priests) who are serving in Mitcham; the

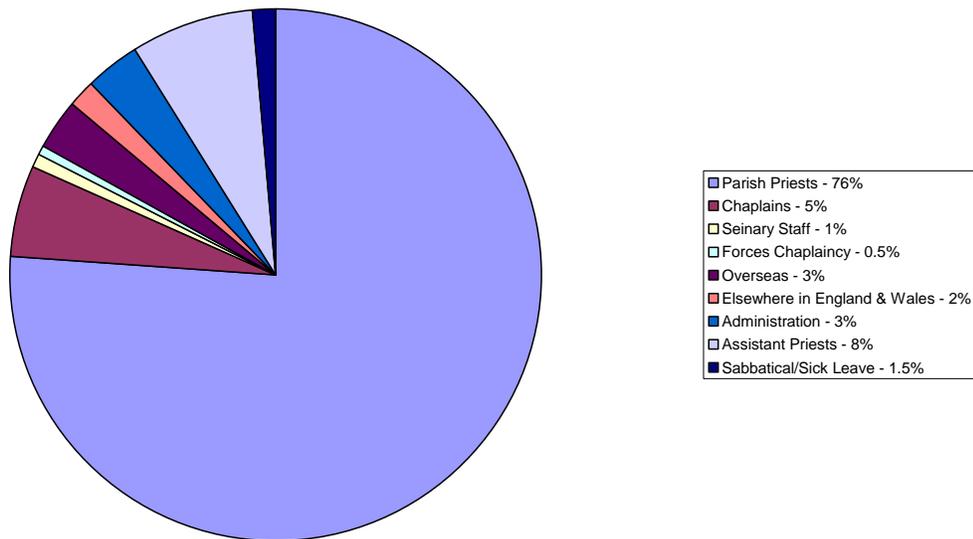
West African Province of the Holy Ghost Fathers (2 priests) who are serving in South Norwood.

- xiii. Those who come from overseas to serve in the Diocese have an important influence in a number of areas. They provide much-needed “man power”, especially for those parishes where the presence of an assistant priest is necessary. They witness to the universal nature of the Church and enable people to widen their appreciation and understanding of the Church. They can also provide rôle models for those from the ethnic minority communities who may be considering a vocation to the Priesthood.
- xiv. It must be acknowledged that enabling priests from overseas to serve in the Diocese is not free from challenges. Some progress has been made in developing a programme for those coming to serve in the Diocese. This will continue, so that priests from overseas can be helped to have a positive experience of ministry here and serve the people of this Diocese effectively.
- xv. It might be helpful to further develop links with particular dioceses and Religious Congregations, such as has been taking place with the Congregations mentioned above. Such development will ensure continuity of clergy provision from overseas and help to ensure fruitful experience for both the priests coming from abroad and for the parishes in which they serve.

### Deployment of Priests

- xvi. The primary call on priestly ministry will always be the parish community, in which the people of God are called together for the Eucharist, which is the focal point of parish life. With this in mind, it will always be the case that the majority of priests will serve parish communities. The present distribution of active priests in the Diocese reflects this:

Distribution of Ministries amongst Secular Priests



- xvii. In recent years, the greatest change in this distribution has been amongst chaplains and assistant priests. The number of priests involved in full-time chaplaincy has grown, especially in full-time posts in hospitals, while the number of assistant priests has declined. Priests are now serving as assistants for only five to six years before taking up appointments as Parish Priests. There is, therefore, a “pinch point” in the provision of assistant priests who are incardinated in the Diocese. At present, there is something of a reliance on priests from overseas when it comes to the appointment of assistant priests.
  
- xviii. There is an increasing trend towards a more professional approach to Chaplaincy, especially in prisons and hospitals. Provision for Universities is a further demand on the Diocese and the way in which all these chaplaincies can be provided will require further consideration.