

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

**STRENGTHENING OUR PRESENCE AS CHURCH:  
A JOURNEY IN HOPE**

**A PROPOSAL FOR THE  
RE-STRUCTURING OF PARISHES  
WITHIN THE DIOCESE**

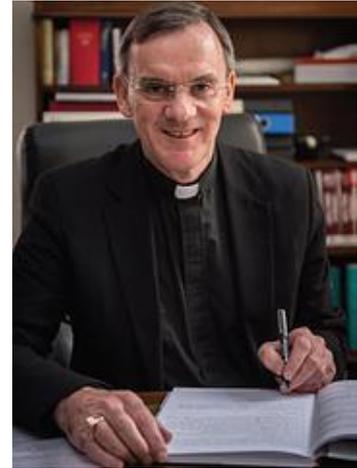
**BISHOP JOHN ARNOLD  
JANUARY 2017**

*The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of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

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am writing to all members of the Church in our Diocese of Salford. This includes the priests and religious and the parishioners of every parish, and every baptised member of our Church. We certainly live in fast changing times and we must recognise the new challenges and also the many opportunities of this present moment. I am very grateful for the helpful and encouraging response to the consultation, but also aware of the disappointment that will be felt by some people. With all the opinions and experience expressed, it is important that we now make the necessary changes which I believe will strengthen our presence as Church in our world today and help prepare the Diocese of Salford for future generations. Just a few situations concerning some parishes and churches need to be deferred for additional consultation before they can be fully incorporated into this proposal. While aware of constantly changing circumstances, it is essential that we have a plan for the present time.



In all our deliberations and discussions we must keep in mind our goal which is to equip ourselves in the best possible way for the continuing mission of the Church which was originally given by Jesus to the disciples after His resurrection. “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time”. (Mt 28:19-20)

If we are to be true evangelists and missionaries then we must be able to nourish our own faith in order to have the strength and knowledge to go out to the whole world. The love that we must try to bring to the lonely and the marginalised of our society and the Gospel values that we can offer to our secular world must reflect the love that we have and show to one another in our parish communities. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si* and *Amoris Laetitia* Pope Francis reminds us that our mission has urgency and he connects together our care for one another, care for our world and our personal and individual responsibility to be “missionary disciples”. Our diocesan consultation has been about stepping back to see what resources we have, what is already being achieved and how we might improve as the “ambassadors for Christ” as St Paul describes us (2 Cor 5:20). Adjustment and change is required to meet the continuing needs and challenges of a changing world.

I am well aware that some of the changes proposed in this document will not be welcomed by some people. I fully appreciate the attachment and loyalty people often have to their particular church, to local traditions and well-forged friendships. Many attach great importance to life-long associations and customs and what they are being asked to do now may require radical change and adaptation. Understandably, so many of the responses to the proposals made in June 2016 were submitted by people who were speaking from their own personal experience of membership in a single parish. Decisions about future structures cannot be limited to individual parishes but must encompass the whole Diocese as a single Church, in all its complexity and diversity of demands. I am truly sorry for the disappointment that will be faced by some communities and individuals but if we are to equip ourselves for the future then we must embrace change. I ask everyone to accept that this proposal is the result of the prayerful discernment of so many people and based on the wisdom, knowledge and

experience of priests and people. I believe it gives us the best possible way forward for our Diocese and will provide the foundation for growth and evangelisation.

The first thing that I want to do is to thank you for the assistance that I have received from so many individuals and groups in this consultation process. Since my proposal document was published in June 2016, I have received over 2000 responses through the web-based questionnaire, the consultation forms, letters, emails and reports of parish meetings. Every response has been carefully considered. Responses have come from individuals, small groups and larger parish meetings. I must also express here my gratitude to those individuals who have given so much time in carefully collating the responses so that all the information and suggestions have been applied to the particular context for which they were intended.

There is no doubting that we face the challenge of a particularly important moment in the history of this Diocese. I am also well aware that we touch on very sensitive matters of how parishes are to be re-aligned, where priests are to be resident, where Sacraments are to be celebrated and even where some churches will close. I can well understand the sense of loss that many will feel if their church, the place of their baptism or marriage or of past family celebrations, is to close. I am also aware that there are churchyards where members of families are buried and there are war memorials and other tributes of particular significance. While acknowledging and being in sympathy with all this sense of sadness and the uncertainty that change brings, I think it is important to remember that, in His ministry, Jesus never made any associations with buildings. His ministry was never tied to a particular place. He ministered by the lakeside, on the road, in people's homes and in the immediate context of meeting people as he travelled. Church buildings are, of course, important signs of the presence of our Church and our Faith in a given location, but they must not become the only expression of the Church. St Paul reminds us that we are "the living stones" and that the Church lives in us and through us and must be made visible by our actions. The fullness of the presence of the Church is not represented by a building but by Christians living their Faith in their daily lives.

In this document some churches are identified for closure. Later in this document, we will consider all that this may mean in reality.

## **BUILDING MISSIONARY PARISHES**

Our social history has inclined us, as Catholics, to build communities around our church buildings and to look inwards. That is not to say that there has not been much successful social outreach in our parishes but the accent may be said to have been largely concerned with our own welfare. We need to be looking outwards and making our parish communities places where we prepare ourselves, by the celebration of the Sacraments and by catechesis, for our mission to the marginalised, the isolated and the forgotten.

The recent Canonisation of Mother Teresa reminds us of the work that is urgently still needed to be done. In celebrating her life and vocation, we must not limit our ideas of poverty as concerning only the destitute on the streets of Calcutta, the slum-dwellers of Nairobi or the people living in the favelas of Sao Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. Poverty, in a great diversity of forms, is all around us and close to where we live and work. In the Diocese of Salford we have communities where there is great

material wealth but from wherever we look, nearby there will be people relying on foodbanks, sleeping on the streets, living in loneliness and isolation and in wholly inadequate housing. Spiritual poverty and the poverty of loneliness and the isolation of the elderly may well exist silently within a few doors of where we live. Pope Francis praised the work of Saint Teresa of Calcutta but reminded us of the “crime of poverty” that surrounds us and the challenge for each of us to recognise it each day, wherever we may be. There has been poverty in every age but the shocking truth of our age is that poverty does not need to exist. There is more than enough for everyone yet, as we waste and squander so much, many simply do not have enough. It is in confronting poverty, in all its forms, that our parishes must find renewed purpose because this is at the heart of the Gospel and is the means by which we fulfil the greatest of the commandments “To love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves”.

If we are to build and develop vibrant parishes then we must rely on all members of the community to take their part. I think we are mistaken if we speak of a “shortage of priests”. We certainly have fewer priests than previously but we also have smaller communities of people in our parishes and we have inherited too many churches. Since we have enjoyed the presence of so many priests in this Diocese, we have mistakenly extended the role of the priest to include all aspects of “running a parish”. Now we have fewer priests but enough to provide for the sacramental and pastoral life of the parish that only a priest can provide. All other aspects of parish life must rely on the collaboration and contribution of the members of the parish community. We might describe a parish as having three distinct but mutually dependant dimensions.

### *1. The Parish as a place of prayer and Sacrament*

In the first place, a parish must be a place of prayer and Sacrament. It is in the parish community that Faith is celebrated in prayer and liturgy and handed on, through catechesis and learning, from one generation to the next. Every parish community must look to celebrate well-planned and prayerful liturgies; relying on Readers, Eucharistic Ministers, musicians, singers and servers to give dignity to whatever liturgy is prepared. A parish must have well-trained Catechists to help young people to prepare for First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. Catechists are also needed to assist parents wishing to baptise their children, helping them to recognise and engage in the importance of the journey on which they are embarking “as the first teachers of their children in the ways of Faith”. Catechists also have an important role in welcoming those adults who feel drawn to the Church and those who have drifted away and may need assistance in their wish to return. Pope Francis also speaks at length in *Amoris Laetitia* of the need for good preparation for couples preparing for marriage and encouragement for those already married who experience all the changes in their relationship throughout their married lives. There are also important pastoral opportunities in providing children’s liturgies for the very young, befriending those in broken marriages and for the bereaved, the sick and housebound and those with physical or learning disabilities. Every member of a parish community should consider how best they may contribute to this building up of prayer and Faith and the sense of welcome and belonging. It is also important that each member of a parish be aware of the ongoing need to grow in their own knowledge and understanding of the Church’s teaching and in the conversion of life that is our individual discipleship.

Much has been said about the difficulties experienced by the elderly in travelling to church and that the closure of some churches will make it even more difficult for many to attend church services. One sign of a vibrant and caring parish community must be its ability to ensure that the elderly and vulnerable are accompanied to church, wherever there are difficulties of distance or a lack of public transport. For past generations distance was a major obstacle but it should not be so, in the same way, in the present age.

## *2. The Administration of a Parish*

The second aspect of the parish concerns its good administration and physical well-being. There are communication opportunities in the provision of a regular newsletter and the maintenance of a parish website, both of which provide valuable opportunities for evangelisation. In the administration of the parish there is a need for financial management which today also requires transparency and clear procedure. Canon Law already requires each parish to have a parish finance committee to assist the parish priest in administering the goods of the parish. We have high standards for safeguarding the vulnerable which must be maintained and supervised. There are numerous tasks required in ensuring that the fabric of the church buildings is in good repair and regularly inspected. The cleaning, maintenance and decoration of a church is a statement about our love of God and the honour we offer to Him. Importantly, there should be, in every parish, a group or committee of individuals who maintain an oversight of all the needs and activities so as to coordinate best practice and good collaboration. Given the importance of such oversight, it will be a priority for such leadership teams to be established in every parish. How these teams are comprised and operate will be the subject of further discussion as the Diocese takes on its new shape.

## *3. The Outward Mission of the Parish*

This third element of a parish must be seen in the light of Pope Francis' constant appeal to 'go out to the peripheries'. This has two particular aspects.

In the first place, every parish community must be aware of the wider community in which it is situated. Unique to the context of each parish will be the particular needs of its local community. Some parishes may have several care homes, a hospital, perhaps a prison. How might a parish respond by providing visitors and Eucharistic Ministers to those who cannot come to the church? Most parishes have primary schools and there are 30 secondary schools and 4 sixth form colleges in the Diocese where there are opportunities to volunteer in tutoring, supervision and administration. The presence of volunteers who are committed to their Faith is a powerful witness to children who may have little encouragement for their Faith within their own home context. There may be areas in a parish of social deprivation. Is there a need for a foodbank, a day centre or night shelter? What provision might be made for the young for 'out of school' activities which may complement the role of Faith education in schools? All of these projects would speak of the Gospel in action. There is also the wider context of the needs of "our common home" and the invaluable assistance that can be provided for the work of agencies engaged in humanitarian work and global sustainable development. We already have strong participation in agencies such as Caritas and CAFOD and other Catholic charities which not only assist in development elsewhere but provide education and awareness for us in understanding our world.

In the second place, we must not neglect the area of dialogue and action with members of other Christian communities and those of different religions. Ecumenism and Interfaith dialogue must, of course, happen at national and international levels but its practical expression must be cultivated in our local communities where people live together and put their faith into practice. Without doubt, much progress has been made in our relations with other churches and there are many projects where there is collaboration, both in sharing spirituality and worship and in social endeavours. With Interfaith Dialogue there is much to be done in recognising all those values that we share with other religions. All the major world religions promote peace, mercy, the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of life. Working together to promote these common ideals can only enhance the society in which we live.

## **THE RE-ALIGNMENT OF PARISHES**

In the consultation document, published in June 2016, various parishes were proposed for amalgamation into newly-designated parishes and some churches were suggested for closure. All of this was with a view to enabling, across the Diocese, the development of the “missionary parishes” described above. Due to the additional comments and responses of so many people, and after prayerful discernment, some of those initial proposals have changed and I believe that our planning for the future is the stronger for the changes that have been made. I return to the image of “pruning for growth” and believe that we are putting a structure in place that will best suit our changing circumstances.

Many people have continued to claim that the changes are due to a “shortage of priests”. This is not the case. For the number of people actively engaged in the practice of their Faith, we have sufficient priests for the pastoral and sacramental care of our people. What is apparent is the decline in the number of people who regularly attend church and participate in the life of the parish community. This is the result of various influences in the secularism of our age. If we build and develop our parishes as “missionary parishes” then there is real hope that people will be drawn back, recognising the purpose of a Faith that has been lacking or been overlooked for some time in their lives. Again, we should remember that Jesus had just twelve apostles and, although the crowds grew at times during his ministry, they also walked away when they did not understand or approve of his teaching. When St Paul wrote his letters to the Corinthians or the Ephesians and others, he was not writing to the population of whole cities but just small groups of Christians in those places. We must not allow ourselves to be obsessed or distracted by numbers. We must organise the priests and people that we have in the best way so as to be witnessing to our Faith by our belief, prayer and action.

Considering which parishes to amalgamate and which churches might be identified for closure was not based on any simplistic formula. We cannot simply choose the parishes with the biggest congregations, or those which are financially most sound. I have deliberately avoided any questions of finance throughout the consultation as that is entirely secondary to our purpose of living the Gospel. If we are giving priority to the Gospel then financial well-being will follow. We have to be aware that the Catholic Church must be present throughout the geographical area of the Diocese and we must have a care particularly for areas where there is social deprivation and for people in the more rural areas. Nor can we simply withdraw from areas where there has been a particularly large

influx of people of other religions, nor where former Catholic communities have dwindled in number. In all these matters there needs to be prudent and good stewardship of resources.

Indeed, some of the parishes which are proposed for amalgamation or which have a church identified for closure have many good attributes and are already “missionary” in many ways. None of that activity should be lost by that community joining with another. In such cases, the reason for closure is usually a question of geography and the close proximity of another church. I appreciate that it calls for great generosity on the part of those who must make a new home for all their commitment and transfer their activities to another place. I ask people to be warm in their welcome to those who must leave one church to attend another. Parish amalgamations will be greatly helped if membership of the leadership team and finance committee of the new parish is drawn from each of the former parishes.

As we seek to have the correct priorities for our pastoral care, we must be aware of the Gospel imperatives to care for the sick and those in prison and this must include the appropriate provision of priest and lay chaplains for our hospitals and penal institutions. Re-aligning our parishes, as is proposed, will free up a number of priests to give more time to these particular ministries.

#### **ON THE CLOSURE OF A CHURCH**

In this document there are a number of churches identified for closure. What will this mean in practice? It will not mean that a church must close at once. Nor does it mean that our Diocesan Church is turning away from the people of that community or denying their skills and commitment. Depending on the availability of a priest, a church identified for closure may well continue as a church for some time. But it is important that people now understand that when the present priest in such a parish moves on there will be no replacement. This allows for planning and preparation.

I would hope that, in most cases, “closure” will mean that – for the present time – there will be no resident priest and no regular celebration of Mass and other Sacraments. It must not mean that all activity ceases and people find themselves abandoned. There will be a church – not far away – that will have been designated as the parish church for that geographical area. It is important that the activities of the closing church should not cease but should be united in the new parish so as to be the stronger for collaboration and development in a larger community.

Care must also be taken in celebrating with thanksgiving all that the church has been as a place of worship and prayer and a specific welcome needs to be afforded by the parish which now assumes oversight of that place. It is essential that the understandable sense of loss should not be allowed to breed resentment and division. Pope Francis, speaking to new bishops in September 2016, warned that the Devil’s primary weapon is to cultivate division in the Church. There is no question of having ‘won or lost’ when a church remains open or closes.

I would hope that uses can be found for any buildings that we don’t currently require, whether churches, parish centres or presbyteries. Are there parish projects such as day centres or night shelters, nurseries or learning centres which might benefit from using the buildings, or similar projects that might be managed by local community groups? Where a particular activity or

apostolate is strong and vibrant, careful consideration must be given as to whether that activity should remain at the closing church or in premises nearby. For example, if there is a thriving social project such as a day centre based at the church then perhaps the church building can be more fully developed to accommodate that project as its new primary purpose. But in order for that apostolate to continue, responsibility for it must be carefully planned and delegated and it must be accountable to the new parish to which it belongs. Local groups may wish to use our vacant buildings for various forms of social projects and preference must be given to those who would provide any Work of Mercy or education. Where a church is leased to others, we must ensure that the purposes for which it is being used are in keeping with our Catholic Faith.

Unless it becomes absolutely necessary to do so, I would like to resist the sale of any buildings or land. With the constant and significant shift in population, the new residential developments and the continual movement of people, we may need these buildings and churches might be required to re-open. I would also want to resist the demolition of any church which is structurally sound and in good repair. Any building must be valued as a resource and put to good use. It must be our urgent care that buildings do not become derelict through lack of use. Where possible, ownership of these churches will be maintained in the hope that these churches may be needed by the Catholic community again in the future.

## **THE PROPOSAL FOR PARISH RE-STRUCTURING**

Responses to the consultation have caused very careful consideration to be given to the suggestions that were made in the proposal document of June 2016. Each proposed parish has been reviewed in the light of those responses. In many instances the responses confirmed what was proposed; in some cases alternative re-alignments have emerged. It also became evident that almost all of the parishes we were proposing to create would be large parishes and so I have decided that we should retain some smaller parishes as part of our structure.

In just a small number of cases, it has not yet been possible to determine the best alignment for a particular parish or a question has arisen as to whether, within a particular situation, a different church than the one suggested in the proposal document should be identified for closure. In these instances, it is necessary and just that those communities have a little more time to discuss the new proposal and to respond before I can say how they will best fit into the new structure.

The proposed re-alignment of parishes for the future of the Diocese is now set out deanery by deanery on the following pages.

## THE DEANERY OF ST JOHN (SALFORD)

Currently: 17 parishes, 19 churches and 14 diocesan priests  
June Proposal: 8 parishes, 14 churches and 9 diocesan priests  
This Proposal: 9 parishes, 15/16 churches and 9 diocesan priests\*

### Proposed parishes:

1. Cathedral Parish of St John the Evangelist
2. St Joseph, Ordsall (served from the Cathedral)
3. St James and All Souls
4. St Thomas of Canterbury, Higher Broughton *and* St Sebastian and St Boniface (discontinuing the use of St Boniface as a Mass centre)
5. Holy Cross, St Matthew and St Gilbert *and* St Mary, Eccles (with closure of St Matthew's church)
6. St Luke and Ss Peter & Paul
7. St Teresa *and* St Joseph, Irlam (with formal closure of Sacred Heart chapel of ease, Cadishead)
8. St Mark *and* St Mary *and* St Charles (with closure of St Mary's church, Swinton)
9. Christ the King *and* St Edmund (which includes Lancashire Martyrs church)

Notes: (1) Parishes 1, 2 & 3 are already canonically established.

### Other pastoral responsibilities:

Schools: 18 primary; 3 secondary  
Hospitals: Salford Royal; St Ann's Hospice; Psychiatric Hospital  
Prison: HMP Forest Bank  
University: Salford

\* The number of non-diocesan priests available to serve in the deanery (if any) will change from time to time, largely based on factors outside the control of the Diocese

## THE DEANERY OF ST AMBROSE BARLOW (SOUTH MANCHESTER)

Currently: 26 parishes, 31 churches and 26 diocesan priests  
June Proposal: 14 parishes, 21 churches and 14 diocesan priests  
This Proposal: 15 parishes, 27/28 churches and 15/16 diocesan priests\*

### Proposed parishes:

1. St John the Evangelist, Chorlton *and* St Ambrose
2. Our Lady and St Alphonsus
3. St Ann, Stretford *and* St Anthony, Trafford Park *and* St Hugh of Lincoln (with formal closure of St Anthony's church)
4. Our Lady and the English Martyrs, Urmston *and* St Monica, Flixton
5. St Joseph, Reddish *and* Holy Family, Dane Bank
6. Sacred Heart and St Francis
7. St Mary, Denton (which includes St John Fisher church)
8. St Kentigern *and* English Martyrs, Whalley Range
9. St Cuthbert, Withington *and* St Bernadette (with closure of St Bernadette's church)
10. St Catherine, Didsbury
11. St Joseph, Longsight *and* St Edward, Rusholme
12. St Augustine
13. St Mary (The Hidden Gem)

The following proposals from the June consultation require further consideration:

14. St Winifred *and* St Mary, Stockport (with suggested closure of St Mary)
15. St Mary, Levenshulme *and* St Richard, Longsight *and* St Bernard, Burnage (with suggested closure of St Richard)

The new proposals for consultation are:

14. St Winifred *and* St Mary, Stockport *and* St Bernard, Burnage (with closure of St Mary's church) – with 2 priests to serve this new parish
15. St Mary, Levenshulme *and* St Richard, Longsight (retaining both churches)

Notes: (1) Parishes 2, 6, 7, 10, 12 & 13 are already canonically established.

(2) All Saints, Barton and Holy Name are non-parochial churches within this deanery.

### Other pastoral responsibilities:

Schools: 27 primary; 6 secondary; 2 sixth form colleges; 1 special; 3 independent

Hospitals: Manchester Royal; St Mary's; Eye Hospital; Children's Hospital; Christie; Francis House Hospice; Stretford Memorial; Trafford General

Universities: Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan, Royal Northern College of Music

\*The number of non-diocesan priests available to serve in the deanery (if any) will change from time to time, largely based on factors outside the control of the Diocese

## THE DEANERY OF ST CHAD (NORTH MANCHESTER)

Currently: 15 parishes, 17 churches and 8 diocesan priests (& 9 non-diocesan in parishes)  
June Proposal: 9 parishes, 14 churches and 6 (or 7) diocesan priests  
This Proposal: 9 parishes, 14 churches and 6 diocesan priests\*

### Proposed parishes:

1. St Clare (served by the Franciscan community)
2. Mount Carmel, Blackley *and* St John Bosco
3. St Dunstan *and* St John Vianney *and* St Margaret Mary
4. St Anne, Crumpsall
5. St Chad
6. Christ the King
7. St Stephen, Droylsden *and* St Anne, Fairfield
8. St Anne with St Brigid *and* St Willibrord (with closure of St Brigid's church)
9. St Patrick (with closure of St Malachy's church)

Notes: (1) Parishes 1, 4, 5, 6 & 9 are already canonically established.

(2) I am asking Immaculate Conception, Failsworth to consider whether or not it would be better placed in the Deanery of Mount Carmel (Oldham) and about possible amalgamation with the territory of the former Holy Family parish, Limeside.

### Other pastoral responsibilities:

Schools: 16 primary; 2 secondary  
Hospital: North Manchester General  
Prison: HMP Manchester

\*The number of non-diocesan priests available to serve in the deanery (if any) will change from time to time, largely based on factors outside the control of the Diocese

## THE DEANERY OF MOUNT CARMEL (OLDHAM)

Currently: 12 parishes, 16 churches and 11 diocesan priests  
June Proposal: 5 parishes, 10 churches and 5 diocesan priests  
This Proposal: 8 parishes, 13 churches and 8 diocesan priests\*

Proposed parishes:

1. St Mary with St Patrick *and* the territory of the former Holy Rosary parish (with closure of St Mary's and Holy Rosary churches)
2. St Herbert *and* Corpus Christi
3. Ss Aidan and Oswald *and* St Joseph, Shaw
4. St Edward, Lees
5. St Mary of the Angels, Ashton (St Ann church) *and* St Christopher, Hurst Cross
6. St Joseph, Mossley

There are two proposals, different to the June consultation, which require further consideration:

7. Sacred Heart and Our Lady *and* St Anne and St Michael (with closure of Sacred Heart and either St Anne's or St Michael's churches)

This is a different alignment of parishes than in the June consultation and I am also asking about the option of closing St Anne's church rather than St Michael's church.

8. Immaculate Conception, Failsworth (currently in the North Manchester deanery) and the territory of the former Holy Family parish (and to be a parish in this deanery)

Alternatively, Immaculate Conception could remain as a separate parish (in either deanery) and Holy Family could be incorporated into Parish 1 above (keeping it with Holy Rosary as it is at present).

Notes: (1) Parishes 4 & 6 are already canonically established and, if need arises, could be amalgamated at a later date.

Other pastoral responsibilities:

Schools: 14 primary; 2 secondary  
Hospitals: Royal Oldham; Tameside General; 2 Hospices

\*The number of non-diocesan priests available to serve in the deanery (if any) will change from time to time, largely based on factors outside the control of the Diocese

## THE DEANERY OF ST THERESE OF LISIEUX (BURY AND ROCHDALE)

Currently: 20 parishes, 24 churches and 17 diocesan priests (& 4 non-diocesan in parishes)  
June Proposal: 11 parishes, 19 churches and 11 diocesan priests  
This Proposal: 13 parishes, 22 churches and 12 diocesan priests\*

### Proposed parishes:

1. Sacred Heart *and* Holy Family
2. St Mary, Littleborough *and* St Patrick
3. St Vincent, Norden
4. Our Lady and St Joseph, Heywood (with closure of Our Lady's church)
5. St Peter *and* St Thomas More
6. Our Lady of the Assumption, Langley *and* St Agnes & St John Fisher
7. Guardian Angels *and* St Hilda
8. St Joseph, Ramsbottom
9. St Marie and St Joseph
10. St Mary and St Philip Neri, Radcliffe *and* St Michael and St Bernadette, Whitefield (2 priests)
11. Our Lady of Grace, Prestwich
12. Our Lady of Dolours (served by the Servite community)

There is a proposal, different to the June consultation, which requires further consideration:

13. St Gabriel and the Angels and St John the Baptist

The June proposal was for it to amalgamate with Holy Family but I want to consult further about the best re-alignment for this parish. Should it stay as it is? Alternatively, the territory of the former St John parish could be amalgamated with St Vincent (Parish 3) and the territory of the former St Gabriel parish could be split between Heywood (Parish 4) and Middleton (Parish 6) or part of it could go with Holy Family (in Parish 1).

Notes: (1) Parishes 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12 & 13 are already canonically established.

(2) Parish 8 could be amalgamated with Parish 7 at a later date.

### Other pastoral responsibilities:

Schools: 24 primary; 5 secondary; 1 sixth form college; 1 independent  
Hospitals: Fairfield; Prestwich; Bealeys Community Hospital; Bury Hospice; Birch Hill;  
Rochdale Infirmary; Rochdale Hospice; Highfield Hospital  
Prison: HMP Buckley Hall

\*The number of non-diocesan priests available to serve in the deanery (if any) will change from time to time, largely based on factors outside the control of the Diocese

## THE DEANERY OF ST JOSEPH (BOLTON)

Currently: 18 parishes, 21 churches and 13 diocesan priests (& 5 non-diocesan in parishes)  
June Proposal: 10 parishes, 17 churches and 9 diocesan priests  
This Proposal: 12 parishes, 19 churches and 10 diocesan priests\*

### Proposed parishes:

1. Our Lady of Lourdes and St Gregory
2. St John Fisher (served by the Schoenstatt community)
3. St Osmund *and* St Teresa, Little Lever
4. St John the Evangelist *and* St Brendan
5. Holy Infant *and* St Columba
6. St Edmund and St Patrick (with formal closure of Ss Peter & Paul church)
7. St Thomas of Canterbury *and* St James *and* St Joseph (with closure of one church)
8. St Mary, Horwich
9. Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Haigh *and* Holy Family, New Springs
10. St Ethelbert *and* St William of York
11. Sacred Heart, Westhoughton
12. St Vincent de Paul (served by the Schoenstatt community)

Notes: (1) Parishes 1, 2, 6, 8, 11 & 12 are already canonically established.

(2) In the future, if the Schoenstatt community were unable to continue serving Parish 12, it could be amalgamated with either Parish 10 or Parish 11.

### Other pastoral responsibilities:

Schools: 18 primary; 3 secondary  
Hospitals: Royal Bolton; Bolton Hospice; Beaumont Hospital; Fallbirch Sanatorium  
University: Bolton

\*The number of non-diocesan priests available to serve in the deanery (if any) will change from time to time, largely based on factors outside the control of the Diocese

## THE DEANERY OF ST JOHN SOUTHWORTH (BLACKBURN AND RIBBLE VALLEY)

Currently: 24 parishes, 29 churches and 15 diocesan priests (& 6 non-diocesan in parishes)  
June Proposal: 10 parishes, 28 churches and 8 diocesan priests  
This Proposal: 12 parishes, 27/28 churches and 10/11 diocesan priests\*

### Proposed parishes:

1. Sacred Heart *and* St Anne
2. St Alban (which includes Good Shepherd church) *and* Holy Souls
3. Holy Family (St Joseph and St Teresa churches) *and* Our Lady of Perpetual Succour
4. St Peter *and* St John Vianney *and* Ss Mary and John (which includes St Paul chapel of ease) - with 2 priests whilst exploring what is best for the area in terms of church buildings
5. Sacred Heart and St Edward *and* St Joseph, Darwen
6. St Wilfrid, Longridge *and* Ss Peter and Paul, Ribchester *and* St Mary, Chipping
7. Our Lady of the Valley (St Michael and St John, Clitheroe and St Mary, Sabden) *and* St Hubert, Dunsop Bridge
8. St Peter, Stonyhurst (with St Joseph chapel of ease) (served by the Jesuit community)
9. St Mary, Bamber Bridge
10. Our Lady of Lourdes and St Gerard Majella, Lostock Hall (served by the Benedictine community)
11. Our Lady and St Patrick, Walton-le-Dale *and* St Mary and St John Southworth, Salmesbury
12. St Mary, Langho *and* St Mary, Osbaldeston *and* English Martyrs, Whalley

Notes: (1) Parishes 8, 9 & 10 are already canonically established.

### Other pastoral responsibilities:

Schools: 22 primary; 5 secondary; 1 sixth form college; 3 independent  
Hospitals: Royal Blackburn; Blackburn Hospice; Beardwood Hospital; Clitheroe Hospital; Kemple View Hospital, Longridge Community Hospital, St Catherine's Hospice

\*The number of non-diocesan priests available to serve in the deanery (if any) will change from time to time, largely based on factors outside the control of the Diocese

## THE DEANERY OF ST JOHN VIANNEY (BURNLEY)

Currently: 18 parishes, 28 churches and 20 diocesan priests  
June Proposal: 9 parishes, 22 churches and 10 diocesan priests  
This Proposal: 11 parishes, 22 churches and 11 diocesan priests\*

### Proposed parishes:

1. St Marie, Haslingden (with closure of St Veronica's church, Helmshore)
2. St James the Less, Rawtenstall *and* St Joseph and St Peter
3. St Mary and St Anselm
4. St Anne, Accrington *and* St Joseph, Accrington (with closure of Our Lady's chapel of ease, Huncoat)
5. St Mary, Oswaldtwistle
6. St Joseph, Todmorden
7. Christ the King, Burnley *and* St Mary of the Assumption, Burnley *and* St John, Burnley (with closure of St Teresa's church) (2 priests)
8. St John the Baptist and St Philip, Padiham *and* St Mary Magdalene (with closure of St Philip's and either St Augustine's or St Mary Magdalene's churches)
9. St John Southworth, Nelson (including Christ Church shared with Methodists)
10. The Good Shepherd (which includes Sacred Heart, Holy Saviour and Ss Peter and Paul churches)

The following proposal from the June consultation requires further consideration:

11. St Charles, Rishton *and* St Hubert with St Wulstan, Great Harwood *and* St Mary, Clayton-le-Moors

The June consultation document did not suggest closure of any of these churches. I would like to consult now about the closure of St Charles church and the possibility of only using one of the Great Harwood churches for Sunday Mass.

Notes: (1) Parishes 1, 3, 5, 6, 9 & 10 are already canonically established.

(2) Longer term we could consider one parish for Nelson (which would affect Parish 10)

### Other pastoral responsibilities:

Schools: 26 primary; 4 secondary; 1 independent  
Hospitals: Accrington Victoria; Mount ESMI Unit; Burnley General; Pendle Community Hospital

\*The number of non-diocesan priests available to serve in the deanery (if any) will change from time to time, largely based on factors outside the control of the Diocese

## **OUR NEXT STEPS**

In the coming months, this new structure will be implemented step by step. There will be no sudden changes, although some must begin within the coming weeks because of the retirement of a number of priests who have kindly continued in ministry until our plan could be finalised. Some of the changes may not need to be implemented for a number of years but, by having a plan, we will at least know what is intended to happen to each parish as circumstances change.

Each of the proposed parishes is either an already existing parish or the coming together of two or more parishes. The first stage of our re-structuring will be to bring each group of parishes into being. In a good number of instances the parishes proposed for amalgamation will already have been working together, sharing a priest. In other cases, it will be a matter of doing this at the most appropriate time for that individual situation (e.g. when one of the priests moves on).

The second stage will then be to look at formally amalgamating each group of parishes into one new parish, following a proper canonically required consultation. It is important to realise that an amalgamation is not one parish taking over another. The formal canonical process requires that each constituent parish becomes “extinct” and that a completely new parish is formed by their union.

The third stage would be to consider whether all the existing buildings within that new parish are required or sustainable or whether, again after a proper canonical consultation, one or more of them might be closed. This would apply to the churches identified for closure in this document but parish communities might also suggest the closure of other churches once they have established what they need to serve that community.

Once we begin to implement the plan, guidance on the various stages and processes will be made available to parishes.

Changes in each parish should be marked by prayer that includes both thanksgiving and new commitment. As far as may be possible, I would hope to be present at Masses that mark a significant change, particularly when a church is closing.

## **FUTURE PRIORITIES**

The completion of this consultation can only be another step on the journey of the Diocese. We must maintain a sense of prayerful flexibility as we live in a fast-changing world and we must be careful to adapt and adjust ourselves so as to be the most effective presence – making Christ present in the world in which we live. The proposed changes to parishes and churches are, I believe, the best for the present moment. But circumstances must, and certainly will, change and we must be listening carefully and considering the “signs of the times”. Even since the opening of this consultation there have been changes in the number of priests available for ministry. Some have announced their retirement, others are newly ordained to ministry, with a significant number considering a vocation to future ordination and ministry. Four religious orders have sought to either extend their presence in the Diocese or establish themselves here for the first time. Two orders of religious sisters have enquired about establishing apostolates here. Another order of sisters has

given notice that it may soon have to withdraw. It would seem that God is clearly telling us that we cannot ignore the need to change, and that further changes will be required.

The success of this stage of our journey rests largely on the redistribution of responsibilities. The priests of the Diocese must develop new areas of delegation and invite members of the parish communities to administer many more aspects of parish life. It will surely mean a time of discernment and learning. The priest must remain in a position of overall responsibility since he must be the shepherd of his flock, as appointed by the bishop. But his primary role must be one of pastoral care, providing Sacraments, pastoral care and encouragement. Pope Francis is well known for his statement that the priests must “know the smell of the sheep” and it must be the priority of the priest to know the people of his community and their needs. He must also be available to greet and welcome those who may seek to be received into the Church or who, having drifted away, need a helping hand to return. These tasks will consume his time and it must be for others to maintain buildings and administer the parish. It is also certainly true that members of the parish community must be encouraged to take up the many and diverse ministries open to them, whether those ministries concern assisting at the liturgies or engaging in pastoral work as catechists, visitors, youth workers, marriage or bereavement counsellors.

Those who undertake responsibilities must be provided with the training and resources that they need and these will be developed from Cathedral Centre to ensure that questions can be answered and problems resolved.

As circumstances change then we must be ready to adapt to them as we are doing now but, as things stand, I believe we have put together a sustainable plan for our immediate future. We have a proposal which must now be implemented carefully, stage by stage.

In concluding this stage of the consultation, I believe that we have engaged in a process that has sought to be open to the experience of priests, religious and people. I know that many have prayed specifically for its success in discerning God’s Will for our Diocese. I also believe that, despite our human frailty and imperfect wisdom, the Lord is walking with us and will provide us with all that we need to take each next step on our journey and help us to prepare and lay the foundations for the future generations in our Diocese. By putting our personal preferences to one side and seeking the common good, there is no doubt that God’s own plan will be achieved in His own time and in His own way – for He knows what He is about.

Let us pray for one another and for our Diocese. “Stay with us, Lord, on our Journey”.

With my prayerful good wishes and thanks

+John  
Bishop of Salford  
14 January 2017

## APPENDIX 1: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What does this mean for my parish?

*The specific way in which your parish is affected by this re-structuring will have been announced by your priest through a pastoral letter from the bishop which was specific to your parish. You can also look up what is intended for your parish on the relevant page of this document (pages 10 to 17). We hope that these questions will answer any queries you now have but your parish priest will be happy to discuss any concerns.*

### 2. What does this mean for our parish groups?

*No groups should cease as a result of any of these changes. However, if your parish is amalgamating or your church is closing, the venue you meet at may change. You may also want to consider combining with equivalent or similar groups within your new parish.*

### 3. How many parishes will amalgamate and churches close?

*Just over 100 of our current 150 parishes will be involved in amalgamations. Of these, 18 are already working with the parish(es) that it is proposed they amalgamate with. The plan only identifies the closure of 18 churches (and 3 of them are not currently being used). It is possible that other churches might be identified for closure in the future, once amalgamations have taken place and the newly-formed parishes have had time to assess their resource needs.*

### 4. How soon will the parish amalgamations and church closures happen?

*This will vary. What is intended for each parish is based on local circumstances and each amalgamation or church closure requires a further period of consultation with the different parties involved. So these changes will not all happen at once but over the coming months and years. This plan is designed to create the future structure of the diocese but it will be implemented in stages appropriate to each situation.*

### 5. Was this a parish-driven planning process? How many people responded to the consultation? How were the decisions made?

*Whilst responding to changing demographic circumstances, the process was driven by the desire to respond to the call from Pope Francis to ensure that all our parishes are missionary and outward facing. The consultation document was developed by the bishop in conjunction with all priests serving in the diocese, ensuring local input into the proposals.*

*There were over 2000 responses to the consultation process. These came via the web-based questionnaire, the consultation forms (returned by individuals and groups), letters and emails, together with reports of parish meetings and a small number of petitions.*

*Decisions about the final shape of the plan were made by the bishop in consultation with a number of advisors and the deans were also consulted about particular issues as part of that process.*

**6. Some people involved in the process say it was flawed, and that the diocese did not listen to their input. Are these criticisms accurate?**

*The original consultation process and the subsequent development of the plan have been based on and will continue to rely on active lay and clergy involvement. There has been a lengthy consultation period that thousands of parishioners from across the diocese took part in. All responses were carefully considered before any decisions were reached about what should be proposed for each situation. None of these decisions were made lightly. Each parish was considered individually with what is best for the needs of that parish being at the forefront of the decision making process.*

**7. What will happen to the churches that are closed? Will they be sold?**

*No decisions on the future use of these buildings have yet been made. Each building will be considered as an individual case and it is hoped that some use can be found for each one, with priority given to whether or not it can be used for a community purpose. There is no intention to dispose of these buildings, unless it becomes absolutely necessary to do so. In a few cases, where the fabric is in poor condition, demolition may be considered as a last resort, with the land being retained for future use or considered for appropriate development such as social housing.*

**8. Why does this have to happen?**

*The history of the diocese is one of establishing or amalgamating parishes and opening or closing churches as required by the growth or decline of the Catholic population in any particular area. These current proposed changes are a continuation of the Church's response to new and emerging pastoral needs.*

*We have to look at how we can serve our parishes in the best way possible, taking into account changing contexts in terms of the number of people regularly attending church and the number of priests available to serve them.*

*The Catholic Church has an essential role to play in serving people across the region, and around the world. In these times of political, economic and social uncertainty, we must ensure the Church continues to be missionary and outward facing, spreading the Gospel message of God's love.*

**9. What does the Church intend to do about the declining number of parishioners?**

*Recently Pope Francis has renewed the call for all members of the church, clergy and lay members, to engage in evangelisation as their primary mission. So when we say "what does*

*the Church intend to do”, it is a question that each individual member of the Church needs to address to themselves: what can I do to draw others in?*

*This plan is aimed at creating the parishes of the future. Welcoming, vibrant and visible parishes, which are successfully engaging with their communities, will hopefully be attractive.*

#### **10. Will older/ sick parishioners still be able to attend a nearby church service?**

*In setting out this plan we have tried to make sure that people don't have much further to travel in order to get to their nearest church. We also hope that a sense of community will be reinforced by parishioners ensuring that no-one is left isolated or without transportation and that no-one in our parishes will be left feeling lonely or alone. We need to be sure that individuals are not merely administered the Eucharist in their homes and receive parish newsletters, but that they are included in social gatherings and brought to Mass.*

*Furthermore, one of the key duties of the Church is to minister to the sick, elderly and infirm and these proposed changes have been developed to give priests more time to perform pastoral duties like this.*

#### **11. When parishes amalgamate, what happens to their liabilities and assets?**

*In essence, all assets and liabilities transfer with the parish into the new parish. Canon Law sets out the conditions for this, dependent on whether the whole parish is being amalgamated with another or whether the territory of an existing parish is being divided up and amalgamated into two or more neighbouring parishes. Canon Law also reminds us of the obligation to respect the wishes of founders and benefactors when dealing with these matters.*

#### **12. Where can I get more information?**

*To learn more about the Diocesan Plan parishioners can:*

- *Contact their parish priest*
- *Visit: [www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk](http://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk)*
- *Call: 0161 817 2200 (Office of the Vicars General)*
- *Email: [salfordparishes@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:salfordparishes@dioceseofsalford.org.uk)*

#### **13. What happens now?**

*Where there are changes identified for your parish, further discussions will now take place in the coming months and years (including any canonically required consultations) before the bishop makes a final decision and any changes are implemented.*

## APPENDIX 2: THE PROCESS OF THE CONSULTATION

December 2014	Bishop John arrives in the Diocese
2015	<i>Preparing the Way</i> consultation
February 2016	Clergy Days with the Bishop and a facilitator
February & March 2016	Deanery Conferences (to begin shaping proposals) and Parish Meetings (on strengths/challenges)
April & May 2016	Individual Deanery Meetings to present proposals to Bishop
June 2016	Compiling the overall diocesan proposal (Bishop & advisers)
Mid-July 2016	Publication of Proposal Document
Mid-July to Mid-October 2016	Consultation with priests and people of the Diocese
Mid-October to December 2016	Consideration of all the responses and compiling of the revised proposal (Bishop & advisers)
14 & 15 January 2017	Promulgation of Bishop's intentions for each parish through individual Pastoral Letters and publication of overall proposal plan for the Diocese
January 2017 & beyond	Implementation of the plan at appropriate stages and with all canonically required consultation on individual proposals

