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Deanery Response Document

Evangelisation: How can each deanery best evangelise in this current time bringing renewal to parish life?

Imagine vibrant, joyful church life within your deanery. Envision life-giving faith experiences that have the power to actively introduce others to the love of Jesus Christ:

- What are your hopes for deanery life in your community?
- Where have you seen or experienced good examples of evangelisation and outreach?
- In what ways could your deanery encourage people to deepen their existing relationship with Jesus Christ?
- In what ways could your deanery introduce people to the love of Jesus Christ for the first time?

At our first meeting, council members were invited to consider Pope Francis' three categories for evangelisation efforts within the Catholic church:

- Nurture and deepening of the faith for those who are already committed
- Engagement and invitation to baptised Catholics who no longer practise their faith
- Outreach to those who do not believe or have never encountered Jesus Christ

Together we conducted a blue-sky thinking exercise to generate ideas and examples of good practice that have the potential to evangelise people in each of these three groups. The suggestions are summarised in ten themes below with illustrative examples.

Prayer and Intercession

- *Examples:* prayer groups, parish prayer, novena for the guidance of Holy Spirit, guided prayer sessions, night opening of church.

Welcome Ministry and Hospitality

- *Examples:* Warm welcome at all Masses, sacraments, retreats and every time we get together, parish transport pool for those who need it.

Social Events and Making Connections

- Opportunities for people (and different generations) to connect to and feel part of the Church. *Examples:* Sunday teas, clubs, ceilidhs, pancake party, 'bowl 'n' blether', film nights.

Children and Family Engagement

- Support families to engage with church life and recover the holiness of children's sacraments. *Examples:* children's liturgy, children's Mass, engage and support

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	<p>sacramental preparation for children and families at baptism, first Communion, confirmation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking parishioners: as a family or young parent, what do you need from the church? <p>Youth engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Examples:</i> develop relationship between parish and school to encourage youth engagement, provide youth outreach space and welcome to teens, youth-led pastoral area groups/clubs/hobbies, youth Masses with young people contributing to ministries, use RCAG parish youth model.• Ask high school students: Why don't they come to church? <p>Adult learning, formation and training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support & empower lay evangelisers and make the practicing into apostles. <i>Examples:</i> teach catechesis/Kerygma, offer a programme of faith formation and education sessions, provide evangelisation training, faith sharing groups, Bible/Scripture groups, 'Catholic' Alpha, RCIA for all, open discussion/Q & A sessions, individual spiritual formation, retreats and days of recollection, SPRED (for all ages). <p>Music ministry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make the music beautiful in every parish. <i>Examples:</i> choir & music group. <p>New models of pastoral work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Examples:</i> employ youth leader, employ volunteer co-ordinator, encourage deanery/pastoral groups, joint pastoral council meetings for geographical areas, encourage all to take part in liturgy (readers, music, catechists). <p>Communication: Media and Digital Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Examples:</i> parish bulletin/newsletter delivery to local households, flyers with invitation and Mass details, produce leaflets/banners/posters, inform/invite people
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	<p>through local media/papers, more use of web/social media to connect and share local faith stories, publicise online Catholic resources.</p> <p>Community outreach and partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care for the practical needs of those who live in our neighbourhoods. <i>Examples:</i> SVDP, foodbanks, crèche facilities, visit (care homes, hospitals, prisons, refuge accommodation). <p>At our second meeting, we invited the council to revisit these ideas and identify priorities which could realistically begin in our deanery with our existing people and resources. Overall, four key themes emerged as a good place to begin evangelisation work in the St Columba deanery. Each pastoral area had early discussions about how they could concretely action one or more of these themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and family engagement• Youth engagement• Adult learning, formation and training• Communication: media and digital outreach
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<p>Collaboration: How can deanery parishes work together in new ways to support each other?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What parishes in your deanery would be natural collaborators in sharing knowledge, expertise and leadership as we plan for the future?• What particular strengths and gifts have you identified across the parish communities in your deanery that will be helpful in this process?• Given the reduction in numbers attending Mass, particularly after the Covid pandemic, how do we respond as a Catholic community?	<p>In our two meetings, it was clear that the deanery council is a good, committed group of priests and lay people willing to work together for the good of the church and the growth of their parishes and the deanery. There are many natural leaders on the council who were ready for training and for the opportunities to be of service to the Gospel.</p> <p>After many nominations, the council decided to invoke the protection of St Columba.</p> <p>The council discussed the division of the deanery into pastoral areas, and agreed on 5 areas: Clydebank 1 (St Joseph's, St Mary's, St Patrick's OK, St Stephen's) Clydebank 2 (OHR, St Eunan's, St Margaret's) Dumbarton (St Mahew's, St Michael's, St Patrick's, St Peter's) Vale of Leven (OL & St Mark's, St Kessog's, St Martin's) Argyll (St Gildas', St Joseph's, St Peter and St Paul)</p> <p>It was further agreed that on particular issues Clydebank 1 & 2 might combine and likewise Vale of Leven & Argyll. It was accepted that these 3 larger pastoral areas would become the norm as the number of priests reduced.</p> <p>It was also suggested that, in the long term, Dumbarton, Vale of Leven and Argyll might become one pastoral area.</p> <p>The pastoral areas undertook scenario planning for the reduction of Masses in the short term to cover illness or holiday times and in the longer term to address the reduction of the number of priests in the deanery from 13 to 7. There was further discussion in one area highlighting the need for a reduction of the number of parishes in the fulness of time.</p> <p>Strengths and gifts will be addressed in the future by asking the parishes to identify their own and bring them to the deanery.</p>
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<p>Resources: What resources of people, finance and buildings does your deanery need to best serve these plans for evangelisation and collaboration?</p> <p><i>Priestly leadership and participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given fewer numbers of priests, how should Mass schedules and the celebration of the Sacraments in your deanery be reorganised?• Given the projected fall in the number of active Priests in the next few years; how can Priests best serve evangelisation efforts in your deanery? <p><i>Lay leadership and participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can greater lay leadership and participation be encouraged in your deanery?	<p>In discussions within the pastoral areas there was a recognition that in almost all of the areas there were too many Masses for the number of available priests. Some groups went a bit further and suggested how these things could be rationalised. For example in Dumbarton, instead of the current 9 Sunday masses (including Carmelite convent), it was suggested that even with only one priest, which is a future possibility, it would be possible to have one vigil mass, 2 morning masses and one Sunday evening mass. There would have to be a further mass to cover the convent but if possible this could be serviced from time to time with visiting priests. Across all the other areas there were similar suggestions.</p> <p>As far as the celebration of the sacraments is concerned, this could prove more of a problem, particularly with the number of First Communions and Confirmations, and indeed for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but appropriate collaboration should be possible.</p> <p>In some of the outlying parishes, the possibility of having a bus to take parishioners to mass, particularly during holiday periods, was discussed.</p> <p>In terms of facilities, is it possible to share buildings with other faiths?</p> <p>As the number of priests continues to fall, there should be a restatement of the role of the priest in a Parish/ Pastoral area setting. The importance of having Mass available as often as possible, along with the celebration of sacraments should remain a priority. If this is the case then the priest cannot be expected to be responsible for the many things which currently form part of his “remit” and other “Parish Activities” need to be taken on by lay members of the community. (See later comments)</p>
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	<p>This area probably brought the most responses from all the groups during our discussion. There was broad agreement that in the future more would have to be expected of lay people. In many parishes at the moment there are a number of people involved mainly in voluntary activities such as reading and as ministers of the Eucharist. However, in a future situation without a resident priest for every parish more will be expected of Lay People. Below are some of the comments received from our discussions and possibly these raise more question than answers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identification of remits for designated lay leader etc.• Training!!• Formation and development are essential: do we know the faith? The Bible?• Catechesis: lay leaders need to take on more roles (e.g. formation, sacramental preparation, bereavement) also show community support (school chaplaincy, visiting hospitals and prisons)• Need lots of people to run parish life.• We need more people offering active ministry to the parish• Our parishes do have a core of members truly committed to the Gospel of Christ and willing to give generously of their time, talent and resources.• Representation is different across our parishes but young people are under represented• Volunteer coordinator/youth minister paid posts?• Parish Priests have had difficult past experiences with trying to ask for help.• Lay people have had difficult past experiences of trying to offer help• Perhaps an extension and widening of parish councils to involve sub groups and sharing of ideas and information
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<p><i>“Synodal Leadership”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What structures do you see being necessary to maximise the effectiveness of synodal leadership in which priests and laity contribute to the communities of faith and worship locally?	<p>All of this suggests a recognition of the change which is coming and a willingness to be involved in that change. Important consideration will have to be given to who the “Lay Leader(s)” might be, the kind of training which will be required for that person or persons, as well as a need to engage families and young people in the way ahead.</p> <p>There was no real opportunity to allow for discussion in this topic. Therefore, there are no responses.</p>
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