

GINGER GROUP Newsletter Advent and Christmas 2017

Hello again. Just to recap: the **Ginger Group**, as you no doubt know by now, is our parish response to the diocesan **Stewards of the Gospel** 'once in a generation' strategic planning and change initiative. We are an open group, tasked by Fr Richard, to address the issues confronting all parishes in the diocese and to respond to the Bishop's lead on change in areas of Evangelisation and Administration.

Drivers for change include the predicted changing demographic situation in our clergy population, with a community of priests declining in numbers, whilst conversely the number of Catholics within the diocese is increasing. In parallel the diocese – including our own parish, as identified in the recent **Quinquennial Report** – faces financial challenges, the essence of which questions the affordability of some existing church premises in relation to their accounted plate offerings.

The **Stewards of the Gospel** change initiative involves all parishes in the diocese, seeking to work together across parish boundaries, anticipating likely changes, influencing the design of proposals and plans on a consultative basis, and shaping the destiny of the diocese and of parish life.

Although the diocesan change process has been running for over 2 years, we have been warned that many parishioners are 'dramatically underestimating' the probable degree of change coming our way in the diocese, and we are being encouraged to 'get real'. Instead of feeling the situation as a threat, we are invited rather to embrace the challenge as an opportunity for growth and development.

The spirit of the process set out by Bishop Alan is one of *consultation and discernment* between the lay of the diocese and their clergy, rather than a top-down style. Typical of this method is the convening of conferences on a quarterly basis, to which all **Stewards of the Gospel** and all **Clergy of the Diocese** are invited to attend, participate and support. The most recent of these conferences was in Brentwood on Saturday 30th September, and the next will be Saturday 24th February 2018.

Bishop Alan has also created a new role – **Diocesan Director of Development** – a salaried professional role, and the bishop appointed Steve Webb, who took up this role in April 2017. Steve has been active in bringing the disciplines of organisational development, change management and planning to the **Stewards of the Gospel** initiative, all within the ethos of Catholic principles and spirituality.

So far Steve has outlined a method of working, and a timetable of milestones and deliverables within that method. In summary, the key points are as follows:

TIMEFRAMES

- 1) Short term: Now (Advent/ Christmas 2017) to 2019
- 2) Medium Term: 2020 to 2025
- 3) Long Term: 2025 to 2035

OUR VISION

Our vision is of a diocese working together with joy to evangelise our diocese, recognising the Church's deepest nature and relying on the productive dialogue between priests and people.

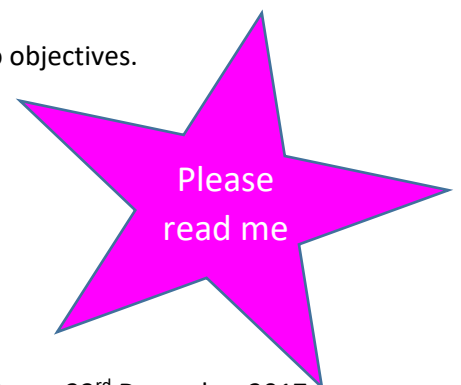
OBJECTIVES

In order to attain our Vision, we shall need to work together to achieve two objectives.

- 1) Maximise the opportunities to evangelise our diocese
- 2) Maximise sacramental provision

STRATEGY

- The Renewal of Our Diocese
- The Restructuring of Our Diocese



GINGER GROUP Newsletter Advent and Christmas 2017

NEWS at Advent and Christmas 2017

The Evangelisation initiative and change process have now at Advent/ Christmas 2017 reached their next stage of development. We were presented with an initial 'Draft Working Plan' in August this year. This draft has now been reworked into an updated version entitled '**A First Formal Proposal**', and was published as a pamphlet at the start of Advent 2017. Bishop Alan has also prepared and filmed an '**Introductory Message**', which he invites us to view before we read the pamphlet.

There are a number of ways to access this diocesan **First Formal Proposal**:

1. The pamphlet is printed out in full and pasted onto two display boards at the back of the Great Bardfield Church of the Holy Spirit from 4th Sunday of Advent, 24th December 2017
2. A few professionally printed copies of the pamphlet are available at the back of both Great Bardfield and Thaxted churches. Please leave in place for others to read too
3. A DVD of Bishop Alan's talk is available within the parish. Please ask Fr Richard or Damian
4. Bishop Alan's message will be screened at the Ginger Group meeting on 6th January 2018
5. Both the pamphlet and Bishop Alan's talk are available on the Diocese of Brentwood website: www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/development
6. We can email you a pdf copy of the pamphlet: please ask Damian or Roger

This diocesan **First Formal Proposal** comprises two main elements: **Renewal** and **Restructuring**.

- The **Renewal** element consists of a '**12 Strand Plan**'
- The **Restructuring** element consists of a '**4 Part Framework**'

From Christmas into early 2018 there now follows a period of review by the parishes: reflection, prayer and discussion. Parishes have been asked to schedule formal meetings in January 2018, and so our next **Ginger Group** has arranged one. The intention is so that parish feedback on the diocesan **First Formal Proposal** can be collected and then presented back to Brentwood **DSPG** in February 2018. Using that feedback the **DSPG** and **DDoD** will evolve the **First Formal Proposal** into a *first draft Final Plan* after Easter 2018. The end goal is to build up to publication of the '**Final Formal Proposal Plan for the Renewal and Restructuring of our Diocese**' on the last Sunday on the current church year (25th November 2018), which is the Feast of Christ the King: '**The Vision for the Diocese of Brentwood 2019**'.

What do we need to do in Great Bardfield and Thaxted parish?

The **Ginger Group** is fully on board trying to align with and support the challenges the Bishop and our diocese clearly face. Having completed our **Parish Questionnaire**, submitted our **Parish Questionnaire Response** on time, the Ginger Group then used these responses to prepare our parish **Formal Parish Proposal (FPP)**. This was both a document and an accompanying 22 minutes film. This **FPP** was reviewed and approved by our Parish Council at the emergency PC meeting on Thursday 5th October 2017, and then subsequently formally submitted in both formats to Bishop Alan and the **DSPG** on Friday 13th October 2017. These are freely available for the whole parish to view on our Parish website: www.bardfieldandthaxted.org.uk. We hope you have all taken time to read and view them by now.

Urgent next steps?

We and our neighbouring parishes now have the work to consider *how* our own parish can interpret and implement our **Formal Parish Proposal**, especially in the light of Brentwood's latest own diocesan proposal pamphlet – **A First Formal Proposal**. The way we have agreed to do that is that each GG member, having read and reviewed the diocesan pamphlet and watched Bishop Alan's message, will then reflect, pray, discern, so as to come prepared for discussion to the next **Ginger Group** meeting convened specifically for this purpose on **Saturday 6th January 2018, 10.00am at Thaxted** English Martyrs. All parishioners are welcome to attend please, as always. Thank you!