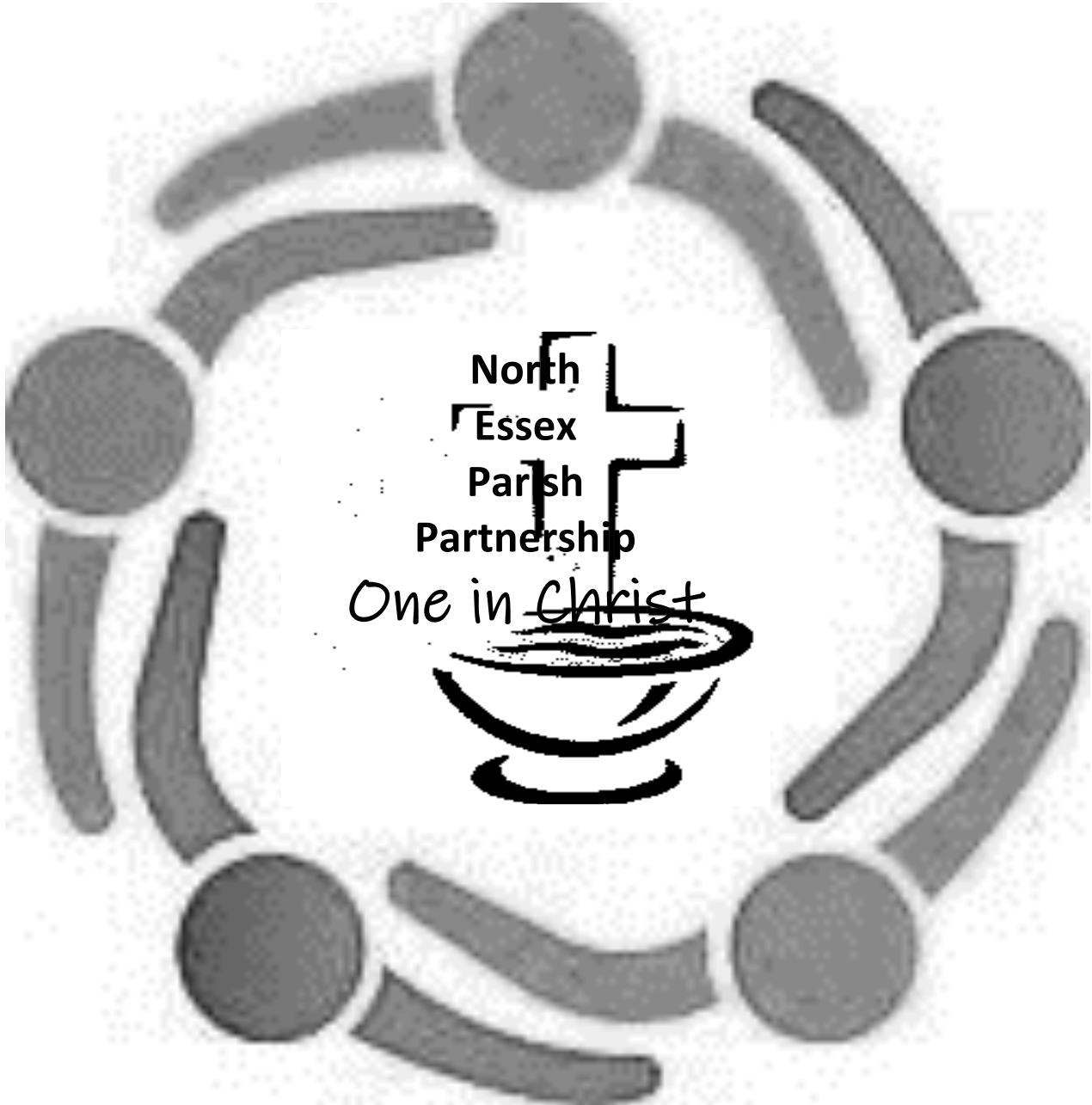


North Essex Parish Partnership



A Draft Proposal for
Abridged Restructuring

The North Essex Parish Partnership

Following the publication of the Diocesan “Vision Document” entitled “Shaping Our Future” (Advent 2018) a Parish Partnership was developed, as a temporary entity that “a Parish Partnership will work together to discern the best long term future for the Parishes that make up the Partnership”

The North Essex Parish Partnership is made up of

- ✦ Our Lady Queen of Peace Braintree
- ✦ Our Lady & St Anne Line Dunmow
- ✦ The Holy Spirit Great Bardfield
- ✦ St Francis of Assisi Halstead
- ✦ St Theresa of Lisieux Stansted Mountfitchet
- ✦ Our Lady of Compassion Saffron Walden

The Aim of the Parish Partnership is to:

Work together in Collaboration
Consult and discuss
Develop our Christian Community
Co-operate
Be Christ Centred

With this in mind the individual Parishes in the Partnership undertook to meet on a monthly basis, with representatives from the Clergy, Stewards of the Gospel and Parish Council members, coming together to, jointly develop, an approach to both Restructuring and Renewal across their Partnership. This approach was adopted to allow each Parish to be given a full voice during discussions.

North Essex Parish Partnership (PPs)

A Draft Proposal for Restructuring

Introductory Notes

1. This proposal is based upon a phased approach to the restructuring of our Parish partnership. Phase 1 is based upon an allocation of 3(+1) = 4 Priests to six Parishes; and Phase 2 upon a reduction to the Priests with one Priest to each pair of Parishes, and one Sunday Mass per Parish.
2. The single Priest allocated to each pair of Parishes would need to be active and capable of handling the work load of two Parishes and of travelling between Parishes on a regular basis.
3. This Proposal recognises the contribution that Deacons make to the Evangelical life of a Parish and the support they provide to our Priests in the provision of Liturgical, Sacramental and Pastoral services to our Parishioners. Hence the term “Clergy” used in this Proposal, refers to Priests and Deacons.

4. For the proposal to be effective our Parish councils, Parishioners, and stewards would take on the responsibilities of Parish administration, maintenance, finance, and fundraising; and would provide secretarial and liturgical assistance to their Clergy. This would give full support to our Clergy enabling them to concentrate upon the provision of Masses, Sacraments, pastoral care, religious guidance and formation to Parishioners. The members of each Parish council would work together in an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual agreement in order to achieve this sharing of responsibilities for the benefit of their community.
5. After due consultation, and with the full support of our Clergy and Parishioners, this Draft Proposal will be presented to Bishop Alan and his team for approval at Advent 2019.

Phase 1 – 3(+1) = 4 Priests

Starting this phase at the direction of the Bishop, and maintaining the (+1) priest for at least a period of time sufficient to enable “capacity increases” to be completed for Phase 2.

NB: Capacity increases would be necessary for the larger Mass attendances at Braintree and Saffron Walden when two Sunday Masses become one Sunday Mass in Phase 2 with an allocation of three Priests.

In this phase the four Priests would be allocated as follows:

One Priest each to the larger “3 Masses” Parishes of Braintree and Saffron Walden and One Priest to each of the remaining two pairs of Parishes.

Notes

1. The pairings would be agreed by the Clergy and the Parishioners of the individual Parishes.
2. There would be no change to the present three Mass times at Braintree or Saffron Walden, giving them time to concentrate on planning and implementing the capacity increases for Phase 2.
3. The Mass times for the two pairs of Parishes with one Sunday Mass per Parish and one Saturday Evening Mass for each pair of Parishes would be agreed between the Clergy and Parishioners. Transportation, e.g. car sharing, would probably be needed for some Parishioners wishing to attend Saturday Evening Mass at another Parish.
4. All changes to present Mass times, and pairing of Parishes, would be subject to the approval of Bishop Alan and his team

Phase 2

Starting after Phase 1 and after capacity increases had been completed, a restructuring plan for the longer term and based upon an allocation of three Priests.

In this phase the three Priests would be allocated at one Priest to each pair of Parishes.

Notes

1. The pairing of Parishes would be agreed by the Clergy and the Parishioners of the individual Parishes.
2. The Mass times of the three pairs of Parishes, with one Sunday Mass per Parish and one Saturday Evening Mass for each pair of Parishes, would be agreed between the Clergy and the Parishioners of the individual Parishes and would take into account the travelling times between Parishes. Transportation, e.g. car sharing, would probably be needed for some Parishioners wishing to attend Saturday Evening Mass at another Parish.
3. All changes to present Mass times, and the pairing of Parishes, would be subject to the approval of Bishop Alan and his team.

Concluding Notes for Phases 1 & 2

1. The sharing of Priests between Parishes during weekdays would need to be carefully planned by the Parishes involved in order to ensure a fair and equitable sharing and coordination of the priest's time between the Parishes.
2. A list of supply Priests would need to be maintained and made available to all Parishes. Pre-booking would be an advantage. It is important to note that, in the absence of their Parish Priest, two Parishes would be without Masses and possibly HDO Masses. This means that the availability of supply Priests would be critical to the provision of Masses to Parishioners.
3. The provision of accommodation for retired Priests within our partnership is a worthwhile and caring project, and has possible benefits for our Parishes in the form of additional Masses, Sacraments, pastoral care, and formation especially in the absence of their Parish priest.
4. RE: Saturday Evening Masses mentioned in Phase 1 & 2: the paired Parishes could, if they preferred, alternate the Saturday evening Mass e.g. on a monthly basis.

Linking Together Two Parishes

Introduction:

Bishop Alan's "Vision" document of Advent 2018 introduced the concept of "Linked Parishes", possibly with a formal agreement. As this Restructuring Proposal is based on three pairs of Parishes then each pair of Parishes could aspire to become a "Linked Parish".

To this end this Restructuring Proposal includes a process for the linking together of two Parishes, as shown in Appendix 1. Thus far one pair of Parishes has begun the process towards linked status.

In all respects the linking together of two Parishes would be subject to the approval of Bishop Alan and his team.

Small Mass Centres

In addition to the six main Parishes in the North Essex Parish Partnership there are also three small Mass Centres located at:

- Thaxted (The Church of the Holy Spirit Great Bardfield Parish)
- Sible Hedingham, (St Francis of Assisi Halstead Parish)
- Hatfield Broadoak (Our Lady & St Anne Line Dunmow Parish)

Each one of these small Mass Centres has been providing weekend Masses for some years to a well-established community.

After due consideration, and taking into account a gradual implementation of the Restructuring Plan by Bishop Alan and his team, the Partnership is of the opinion that these three Mass Centres should be able to continue their present Mass arrangements for the foreseeable future.

Summarising Points

1. The Parish Partnership, accepting that there are not enough Priests to serve all the individual Parishes, presents a feasible approach based upon the sharing of three Priests between six Parishes i.e. one Priest per pair of Parishes. This assumes that the necessary capacity increases will be implemented.
2. Every Parish would have a Sunday Mass, and each pair of Parishes would have a Saturday evening Mass giving three Masses per priest each weekend.
3. There would be sufficient capacity in every church for all Parishioners attending Sunday Mass.
4. Each pair of Parishes would have their own Parish priest.
5. The proposal gives minimum disruption for the Partnership Parishioners.
6. Due consideration has been given to the small Mass Centres of Thaxted, Sible Hedingham and Hatfield Broadoak.
7. There is a process for linking together Parishes (see Appendix 1)

Key Point

It has to be stressed that the availability of supply Priests is of key importance because in the absence of their Parish priest, each pair of Parishes would be without Masses. The local accommodation of retired Priests being able to say Mass would help reduce this problem to some degree, and this point should be given serious consideration.

Appendix (1)

Draft Process for Linking Together Two Parishes

PARISH 1:

PARISH 2:

Introductory Notes

1. This part of the draft restructuring proposal describes a process for two Parishes to consider when seeking “Linked” status. It would be subject to due consultation with the support of the Clergy and the involvement of the Parishioners in the individual Parishes. Subsequently the approval of Bishop Alan Williams and his team, at Advent 2019, would be sought. It is based upon the Linked Parishes sharing a Priest to be allocated by Bishop Alan.

NB This proposal does not preclude other types of linking between Parishes as in, for example, working together on evangelical and social matters, whether or not they share a Priest.

2. It would be advisable to start the process ASAP in order for the Parishes to be linked in time for the arrival of their allocated Priests.
The participating Parishes would share their experiences and lessons learned during the process of achieving linked status with the other Parishes in the Partnership.

The Process

1. Representatives from each Parish would meet together to consider whether or not the linking of their Parishes would be both desirable and feasible, and would they be prepared to work together on the basis of mutual agreement, and the equitable sharing of their allocated priest. The representatives would include their Clergy, Stewards, and Parish Council Chair-Persons/ members.
2. Recognition of the independence of both Parish communities would be essential for the maintenance and continuation of their communities, and for the linking together to be successful, mutual respect would be essential.

“Linking” is not “merging”, and neither Parish should feel subsumed into the other.

3. After obtaining the agreement of their Clergy and their respective Parish communities for the commencement of the process the Parishes would establish a Joint Working Committee (JWC) comprising their Clergy, stewards, and council chair-persons/ members.
4. Whereas the established systems in each Parish for the present “one priest” per Parish arrangement would carry forward as the basis of operation, this process focuses upon those new and extra requirements relating specifically to the sharing of a priest by the two linked Parishes.

5. The requirements for the JWC to consider would include, for example:

5.1. Sharing of costs

- Priest's stipend and vehicle running costs
- Equipment, stationery and printing costs related to administration, publicity and notices etc.

5.2. The Mass times for each Parish

- The agreement of Mass times for each Parish
- For weekend Masses, HDO's and the busier periods of Easter and Christmas
- For weekday Masses in each Parish – the Mass times would be subject to the approval of Bishop Alan and his team.

5.3. Sharing the Clergy's time, for example:

- For other sacraments, pastoral care and evangelical activities, the JWC would need to take a balanced approach when considering, for example, isolated Parishioners - housebound, hospitalised, and care home residents – especially those in rural areas
- The organising and/or participation in joint, or Deanery, events, both evangelical and social

5.4. Supplies of church equipment and consumables (e.g. candles, wine, Repository)

- Joint (or partnership wide) bulk purchasing would give a price advantage to the Parishes

5.5. The Priest's Diary

- A system whereby each Parish keeps their Clergy up to date with timely notifications for their diaries – this could be done electronically

5.6. Supply Priests

- As has already been mentioned in the other parts of the draft restructuring proposal – the need for supply Priests would become more significant in a situation where the absence of a priest would result in two Parishes without Masses and the other sacraments.