Diocese of Brentwood

Stewards of the Gospel

Parish Questionnaire

Stewards of the Gospel – Parish Questionnaire

This questionnaire provides a framework for each parish community in the Diocese to explore its vitality and future direction. The prayer, consultation and reflection that lead to your responses are of central importance to this whole process; the questionnaire is simply the document for systematically recording the outcomes of your deliberations.

The Questionnaire
The questionnaire is presented in 3 parts.

Part A – *A Picture of Our Community* – provides the opportunity to gather, explore and present facts and figures about a wide range of facets of parish life.

Part B – *Reflective Questions* – key questions under 10 main headings for open discussion by your parish community, and the opportunity to highlight existing good practice.

Part C – *Our Community's Initial Thoughts and Ideas about the Future* – where your parish community is asked to provide its first thoughts about how it might move forward.

Ultimately, we would like all parishes to provide their final responses using an on-line questionnaire as this will allow us to collate and analyse responses efficiently – and we will be providing information later in the year about how to do this. However, while drafting and sharing your responses within the parish, you may find that the electronic version of the questionnaire proves to be the best way of recording and storing your responses. The e-version of this document is available to download under "resources" on the diocesan website, www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/evangelisation.

Please get in touch if you have any questions or if you have any comments or suggestions to make.

The DSPG Steering Group*:* Fr Tom Saunders, Fr Andrew Headon and Ms Adele Angel can be contacted at
dspg@dioceseofbrentwood.org

Background Details

Name of parish: [   ]

Details of church(es) in the parish:

Church name	Church address

Key parish contacts:

Priest(s)	Permanent Deacon(s)	Steward of the Gospel

Details of main contact for this questionnaire:

Name:		**Address:**
Telephone No:		
Email Address:		

Part A – A Picture of Our Community

Part A *of the questionnaire takes respondents through the 10 main headings and requests detailed responses to a number of factual questions under each.*

1 The Christian Faithful

1.1 Please complete the grids below to indicate how the number of those worshipping in your parish community has changed since 1985.

Mass attendance

1985	1990	1995	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015

Baptisms

1985	1990	1995	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015

Confirmations

1985	1990	1995	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015

Marriages

1985	1990	1995	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015

Receptions

1985	1990	1995	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015

1.2 Are you aware of any significant demographic changes (e.g. a large increase / decrease in the overall population, an increase in the number of immigrants etc.) in your local area in the last 10 years that have impacted / will impact on your parish?

　○　Yes　　　　　　　○　No

1.3   If Yes**,** please give a brief description of the changes and their impact on your parish community.

Brief description of change	Impact or potential impact

1.4   Are you aware of other significant changes in the local area that are impacting / likely to impact upon your parish? (Examples could include: major housing developments, the closure of a large employer, the development of a new industrial estate, an increase in youth unemployment etc.)

○   Yes   ○   No

1.5   If Yes, please provide a brief description of the changes and their impact / potential impact on your parish community as far as you are able.

Brief description of change	Impact or potential impact

1.6   Based on the most recent reported average mass attendance for your parish please give an *approximate* age breakdown using the categories below.
Note: We are seeking a 'best guess' here - unless you feel that taking a more systematic / survey approach would be helpful to you.

Age range	Approximate number
0-10	
11-18	
19-25	
26-49	
50-70	
Over 70	
TOTAL	

2   Leadership

2.1   Please provide details about the leadership roles in your parish community (e.g. Permanent Deacons, Lay Leaders, Chair of Parish Pastoral Council, SVP President, Chair of Finance Committee, Head Teacher, Chair of Governors, Music Group Leader etc.)
Please provide approximate numbers where possible.

Role	Number

2.2 Please describe the situation in your community regarding a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) or equivalent group.

    ◯   No PPC or equivalent is in place *(Go to Question 2.11)*

    ◯   A PPC or equivalent is in place but is having little or no impact on the parish community

    ◯   A PPC or equivalent is in place and is having a significant impact on the parish community

2.3 Where a PPC or equivalent is in place, please indicate the year that it was established.

2.4 Where a PPC or equivalent is in place, does it have a written constitution?

    ◯   Yes   ◯   No

2.5 Where a PPC or equivalent is in place, how frequently does it meet?

Monthly	Every 2 months	Every 4 months	Every 6 months	Annually	Other
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

If other, please specify

2.6 What is the process for setting the agenda for the PPC or equivalent?

    ◯   The agenda is agreed at the beginning of the meeting

    ◯   The agenda is set at the previous meeting

    ◯   The chair seeks items in advance

    ◯   The chair determines the agenda

    ◯   There is a standard agenda for every meeting

2.7 Who chairs the PPC or equivalent?

    ◯   Priest

    ◯   Deacon

    ◯   Lay person

    ◯   Religious
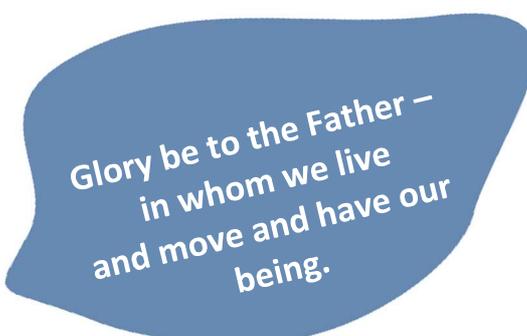
Glory be to the Father – in whom we live and move and have our being.

2.8 How are people in the parish informed about the membership and work of the PPC or equivalent?

2.9 Which parish(es) is / are represented on the PPC or equivalent?

2.10 What is the number and approximate age profile of members?

Age range	Number
Under 40	
40 -70	
Over 70	
TOTAL	

2.11 Is there a Finance Committee in place in the parish?

O   Yes   O   No

2.12 If Yes, how frequently does it meet?

Monthly	Every 2 months	Every 4 months	Every 6 months	Annually	Other
O	O	O	O	O	O

If other, please specify

2.13 What is the process for setting the agenda for the Finance Committee?

O   The agenda is agreed at the beginning of the meeting

O   The agenda is set at the previous meeting

O   The chair seeks items in advance

O   The chair determines the agenda

O   There is a standard agenda for every meeting

2.14 Who chairs the Finance Committee?

Priest	Deacon	Lay Person	Religious
O	O	O	O

2.15 How are people in the parish informed about the membership and work of the Finance Committee?

2.16   What is the number and approximate age profile of members?

Age range	Number
Under 40	
40 -70	
Over 70	
TOTAL	

Glory be to the Son - whose name we bear and who calls each of us to be his disciples;

3   Active Involvement of People

3.1   How many people in your parish community are registered for ministries that were subject to DBS (formerly CRB) checks in 2015?

3.2   How does this compare with the position in 2010?

3.3   Are there any paid workers for your parish community?

O   Yes   O   No

If Yes, please provide details below.

Role Title	Number	Total hours contracted per week

3.4 Please indicate approximately how many lay people in your parish, in the age categories shown, are involved with delivering parish / deanery programmes.

Role	Under 40	40 - 70	Over 70	Total
Baptism preparation				
Holy Communion preparation				
Confirmation preparation				
Marriage preparation				
RCIA programme delivery				
Other *(please list these below)*				

3.5 Please list below other non-liturgical* lay voluntary roles that are present in your parish community along with numbers in the age categories shown. Please think widely here (e.g. PPC members, church cleaners, welcomers, Finance Committee members, musicians, flower arrangers, gardeners etc.)
Note: Question 4.4 will ask for information about liturgical roles.

Role	Under 40	40 - 70	Over 70	Total

3.6   Please identify the full range of social activities that take place in the parish community along with their frequency (where relevant).

Social Activity	Frequency

4   Worship and Spiritual Life

4.1   Please indicate the venues and times of masses currently celebrated each weekend.

Venue	Day	Time

4.2 Please provide details of any planned changes to these arrangements.

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| |

4.3 Please provide details of other regular services celebrated in the parish community along with an indication of their frequency and venue.

Service	Frequency	Venue

4.4 Approximately how many lay people have specific roles in the planning, preparation and celebration of masses and other liturgies?

Contribution	Number
Readers	
Eucharistic Ministers	
Funeral Assistants	
Children's Liturgy leaders	
Altar Servers	
Musicians / Choir	
Leaders of Morning / Evening Prayer	
Sacristans	
Homily Preparation	
Other, please specify below	

4.5 Please identify the range of other activities that contribute to the spiritual life of your parish community. Please think widely about the full range. (e.g. Prayer groups, Rosary groups, Parish Pilgrimages, Retreat Days, Accompanied Prayer etc.)

Group / Activity	Frequency	Venue

5 Education and Continuing Formation

Adult Formation

5.1 Please identify the Adult Formation activities (offered by the parish, deanery or diocese) that people from your parish have participated in over the last 3 years. Where possible, please indicate the approximate number of people who have participated.

5.2 ...ore about their fa...

Adult Formation Activity	Yes / No		Approximate Number
Catechist Training Programmes	O	O	
Eucharistic Ministry Training	O	O	
Reader Training	O	O	
CCRS Courses	O	O	
Lenten Study Groups	O	O	
Other Formation Activities *(please list below)*	O	O	

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**You
ng
people in schools and their families**

Catholic primary school(s) serving your parish

5.3   For each Catholic primary school serving your parish please complete the following information:

School Name:			
	2008	**2012**	**2015**
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2008	**2012**	**2015**
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2008	**2012**	**2015**
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2008	**2012**	**2015**
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2008	**2012**	**2015**
Total no. of Pupils			

% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2008	**2012**	**2015**
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

5.4 Please describe briefly how the primary school(s) and the parish work together to prepare children for the sacraments.

5.5 How is / are the primary school(s) involved in the adult faith formation of the children's parents?

5.6 Where a Parish Pastoral Council or equivalent exists is there representation from the Head Teacher(s) or other staff member?

   O   Yes   O   No

5.7 Where a Parish Pastoral Council or equivalent exists does the membership include school governors?

   O   Yes   O   No

to build his Kingdom and to go out into the world and bear its fruit.
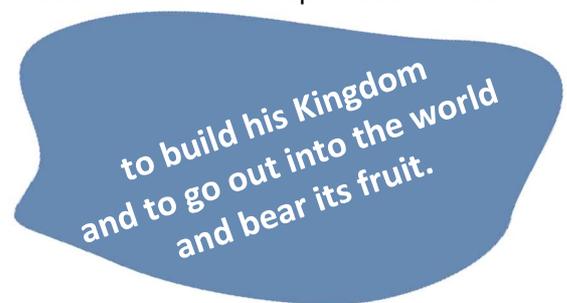
5.8   Please describe how the primary school promotes links with the parish community and how the parish community promotes links with the school (e.g. Mini Vinnies, Fair Trade, joint social activities etc.)

Link	Brief description
Example: Joint Social Events	*Termly joint fund-raising social events held in school hall*

5.9   Please give details of any joint parish / school celebrations of the Eucharist. Please include frequency and location.

5.10   Please give details of any joint school / parish non-Eucharistic celebrations. Please include frequency and location.

5.11   Please describe any ways in which the school and parish share their buildings and other resources. (e.g. Hall, meeting rooms, minibuses etc.)

Catholic Secondary (including Middle) school(s) serving your parish

5.12   For each Catholic secondary school serving your parish please provide the following information:

School Name:			
	2008	**2012**	**2015**
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2008	**2012**	**2015**
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

School Name:			
	2008	**2012**	**2015**
Total no. of Pupils			
% of Catholic Pupils			
Total no. of Teachers			
% of Catholic Teachers			

5.13   Please describe briefly how the secondary school(s) and the parish work together to prepare young people for the sacraments.

5.14 How is / are the secondary school(s) involved in the adult faith formation of the children's parents? (Include any joint work with the parish).

5.15 Where a Parish Pastoral Council or equivalent exists is there any representation from the secondary school(s)?

○   Yes   ○   No

5.16 Please describe how the secondary school(s) promote links with the parish community and how the parish community promotes links with the school(s) (e.g. Fair Trade, John Paul II Award, joint outreach activities etc.)

Link	Brief description
Example: Lenten Fundraising initiatives	*Joint fundraising effort between parish and school with a specific outreach cause identified each year.*

5.17 Please give details of any joint parish / secondary school celebrations of the Eucharist. Please include frequency and location.

5.18 Please give details of any joint parish / secondary school non-Eucharistic celebrations. Please include frequency and location.

5.19 Please describe any ways in which the school and parish share their buildings and other resources. (e.g. Hall, meeting rooms, minibuses etc.)
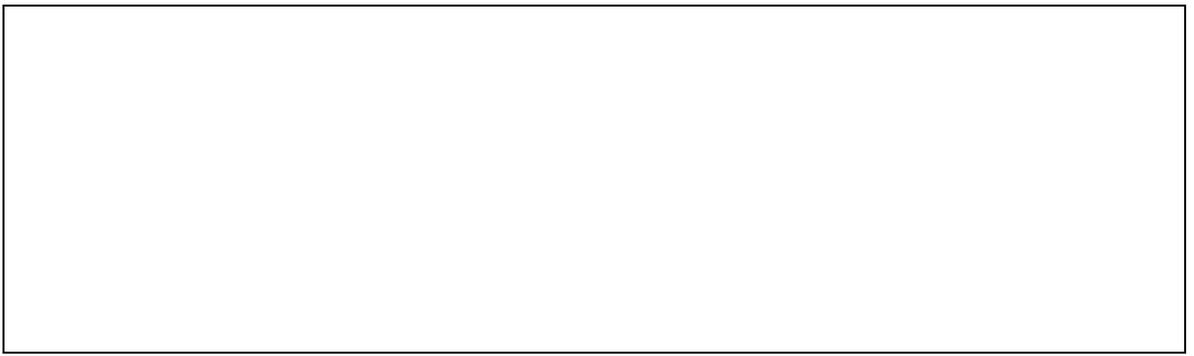
6 Outreach

6.1   Does your parish / deanery offer a RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) programme?

    O   Yes   O   No

6.2   If Yes, how often does this take place?

6.3   Please indicate any outreach activities that your parish is involved with *in the local area*
(e.g. Food banks, Homeless projects, Asylum Seekers / Refugees, Prisoners / the families of prisoners, Drop-ins, Chaplaincy, Justice and Peace, Lourdes Youth etc.) Please indicate whether the parish makes a financial commitment.

Outreach activity	Brief description	Financial Commitment (Yes / No)	
Example: Redbridge Sunday Drop-in	*5 parishioners are involved on the weekly rota for this ecumenical project across the town. All parishioners are asked to contribute canned goods which are collected each week.*	●	O
		O	O
		O	O
		O	O
		O	O
		O	O
		O	O
		O	O
		O	O
		O	O
		O	O
		O	O

6.4   Please describe any active involvement your parish has in the cultural and political life of the local neighbourhood / district (e.g. local governance, social action, ward meetings, community forums etc.)

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6.5   Please describe any links that the parish community has *with other parts of the world.*
(e.g. CAFOD, MISSIO – Red Boxes, our twin Diocese of Dundee, Aid to the Church in Need, parish overseas projects etc.) Please indicate whether the parish makes a financial commitment.

Outreach activity	Brief description	Financial Commitment (Yes / No)	
Example: Kenya Project	A strong link has been in place for 10 years with Community in Kenya resulting in the development of various activities including a village-based water project and a chicken farming project.	●	○
		○	○
		○	○
		○	○
		○	○
		○	○
		○	○
		○	○

6.6   During the past 12 months in what ways has the priest / deacon / religious engaged with other Christian faith leaders in the locality?

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6.7 During the past 12 months in what ways has the parish community engaged with other Christian communities in the locality? (Please include activities / services as part of Churches Together, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Joint acts of witness / shared worship, joint social activities and joint outreach activities.)

Activity	Brief description
Example: Good Friday Walk of Witness	*Around 70 people from all Christian denominations in the town walked behind a cross being carried between the churches concluding with prayer in the Town Centre.*

6.8 Over the past 12 months in what ways has the parish community engaged with Faith communities other than Christians in the locality? Please include visits, talks, joint activities etc.

Activity	Brief description
Example: Talk about the Jewish Passover Festival	*Well attended evening talk at St Michael's Church with invitations to all Christian denominations in the area.*

6.9 In what ways does the parish publicise itself and its activities to the wider community locally? (e.g. local media, posters in public buildings, website, leaflets etc.)

7   Finances

7.1   Please complete the details below.

a)   Income and Expenditure

£'s	2006	2010	2015
Income:			
Offertory			
Gift Aid			
Donations			
Other income			
Total Income			
Expenditure:			
Property			
Personnel			
Other costs			
Total Expenditure			
Surplus / (Deficit)			

b)   Surplus / deficit ignoring any extraordinary income or expenditure

£'s	2006	2010	2015
Surplus / (Deficit)			

NB. This represents income minus expenditure, ignoring any extraordinary income or expenditure, e.g. one-off legacy or significant property repairs, etc.

Please answer the following questions based on the information collected above.

7.2   Does the current annual income for the parish meet its annual expenditure?

O   Yes   O   No

7.3   How has the parish income changed since 2006?

7.4   What are the major factors that have impacted upon parish income since 2006?

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7.5   Please provide the following information about parish balances:

£'s	Amount at March 2006	Amount at March 2010	Amount at March 2015
Parish Deposit (or loan)			
Parish Current Account			

7.6   What is the percentage of people in the parish community who
       are signed up to Gift Aid?

7.7   What is the average offertory per head each week?

7.8   Please describe how parishioners are informed annually of the parish finances.

       O   By verbal statement

       O   By a displayed written statement

       O   By each person receiving a written statement (e.g. in bulletin)

       O   Through a general meeting

       O   Other – please describe

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7.9   Please describe any significant fundraising activities that are in place within the parish at present.

Purpose of fundraising	Method(s) used
Example: To subsidise costs for young people going to Lourdes	*Raffles and sponsored walk*

7.10 Please identify any factors (e.g. population shift, changes in local employment etc.) that will have a significant impact on the *financial position* of the parish over the next 5 years.

Factor	Potential Impact

7.11 Please describe any expenditure (excluding property costs) of more than £15K per individual project, anticipated within the next 5 years.

Glory be to the Holy Spirit – pouring out grace and guidance, forming us and renewing us.

Nature of Expenditure	Anticipated Cost
	26

8 Facilities

Note: Where there is more than one church within a parish, this section will need to be repeated for each church site. Additional copies of this section and the next (Section 9 – Geographic Distance) are available on the website. Please use as many of these as you require.

8.1   Please provide information about the buildings associated with each church site within the parish.

Parish Name	Church Name	Capacity

In your opinion		Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
8.2	What is the overall state of repair of the Church?	O	O	O	O
8.3	What is the overall state of repair of the Presbytery?	O	O	O	O
8.4	What is the overall state of repair of the Church Hall?	O	O	O	O
		Yes	**No**		
8.5	Is there a car park?	O	O		
8.6	If Yes, how many parking spaces are there?				
8.7	Is there a parish office?	O	O		
8.8	Are there secure on-site storage facilities for confidential documentation?	O	O		
8.9	Is there an appointed Health & Safety Officer?	O	O		
8.10	Are the following regular check-ups up to date:				
	• Portable electrical appliances?	O	O		
	• Gas safety	O	O		
8.11	Are the following facilities available for people with disabilities?				
	• Accessible toilets	O	O		
	• Level access	O	O		
	• Ramped access	O	O		
	• Loop system	O	O		
8.12	If any of the above provision is lacking are there plans in place to improve the facilities?	O	O		
8.13	If Yes, please elaborate:				

8.14 Does the church have a cemetery?

○ Yes   ○ No

8.15 If Yes, who has responsibility for its care?

8.16 Please identify any other land / property for which the parish is responsible. (e.g. Residential lettings etc.)

Property / Land	Description

8.17 Please describe the meeting spaces that the church has and how many people they can accommodate.

Meeting Space	No. of people

8.18 Is there a place for smaller weekday Masses?

○ Yes   ○ No

If Yes, please provide details

8.19 Does the community have property that is in excess of its requirements?

○ Yes   ○ No

Inspire us all in the Diocese of Brentwood to live the Gospel,
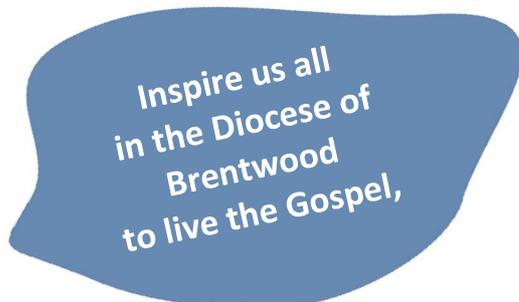
8.20 If Yes, please give details and any suggestions of ways to realise its potential.

Property / Land	Details / Suggestions

8.21 Are your premises used by external groups / organisations?

  ○   Yes   ○   No

8.22 If Yes, please provide details of the nature and frequency of the activity and whether the organisation pays a hire charge.

Group	Activity	Frequency	Hire charge (Y / N)	
Example: Scouts	*Pack Meeting*	*Weekly during term time*	●	○
			○	○
			○	○
			○	○
			○	○
			○	○
			○	○
			○	○
			○	○

8.23 Does the parish collaborate with other denominations locally regarding use of buildings?

  ○   Yes   ○   No

8.24 If Yes, please elaborate.

8.25 Do you anticipate any instances of expenditure on property (£5k or more on a single item / project) in the next 5 years?

  ○   Yes   ○   No

8.26   If Yes, please provide details.

Expenditure	Anticipated Cost

8.27   Please indicate the distances from the nearest primary and secondary schools to the church.

Name of school	Distance

9   Geographic Distance

Note: Where there is more than one church within a parish, this section will need to be repeated for each church site. Additional copies of this section and the previous one (Section 8 – Facilities) are available on the website. Please use as many of these as you require.

Parish Name	Church Name

9.1   How many miles is it by road to the nearest 3 Catholic churches from this church?
      (See data pack)

Church Name	Distance

9.2   From which parish church was your parish originally founded?

9.3 With which local parish / church communities does your parish have the strongest relationship(s)?

9.4 Please describe any significant geographical obstacles between this church and other Catholic church(es) in your locality.

9.5 Based on the experience of your parishioners, how accessible is this church using public transport?

Easily	Moderately	With difficulty	Not at all
O	O	O	O

Please elaborate.

9.6 Does the parish provide any regular transport to church services?

O   Yes   O   No

9.7 If Yes, please explain.

10 Young People

10.1   Please describe how work with young people is co-ordinated within your parish.

- ○   No co-ordination in place
- ○   Co-ordinated by the priest
- ○   Co-ordinated by a permanent deacon
- ○   Co-ordinated by a paid youth worker
- ○   Co-ordinated by a volunteer
- ○   Co-ordinated by a group of volunteers
- ○   Co-ordinated by the Parish Pastoral Council
- ○   Other (please describe)

to be open to change and to move forward together in hope.

10.2   What activities, opportunities or projects are currently in place specifically for young people in your parish?

Activity	Brief description

10.3   How are young people involved in the wider planning / decision-making within the parish?

10.4 Please describe the level of involvement that your parish has with opportunities provided by our Diocesan Youth Service (BCYS) and other Diocesan opportunities for young people.

Activity	Not involved	Limited involvement	Quite involved	Very involved
Walsingham House Youth Retreats	O	O	O	O
Monthly Youth Mass	O	O	O	O
St John Bosco Camp	O	O	O	O
Flame Events	O	O	O	O
World Youth Day	O	O	O	O
School missions programmes (e.g., by the Sion Community)	O	O	O	O
National Youth Sunday	O	O	O	O
Lourdes Pilgrimage – Youth Section	O	O	O	O
Others – please specify:				

11 Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life

11.1 How many ordinations to the priesthood or diaconate have there been from your parish in the last 20 years?

11.2   How many men or women have entered religious life from your parish in the last 20 years?

11.3   Are there any current seminarians or religious postulants from your parish?

11.4   Are there any initiatives which your parish is taking to promote and encourage vocations to the priesthood, deaconate or religious life?

12 Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches

12.1   Are there any ethnic chaplaincies or Eastern Catholic Churches meeting in your parish?

Description	Frequency: Monthly/Weekly	Numbers

12.2   Are any Catholics who are resident in your parish regularly attending an ethnic chaplaincy outside the parish, either as an alternative to the parish Sunday Mass, or in addition to attending the parish Sunday Mass?

Description	Location	Time	Freq.: Mthly/Wkly	Numbers

12.3   Are any Catholics receiving pastoral care from an ethnic chaplaincy either within the parish or outside the parish?

Description	Location	Numbers

Thank you for completing Part A of the questionnaire.
Part B is very different, encouraging more reflection and discussion.

Part B - Reflective Questions

When Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee and called his first disciples (Mt 4:18), they must not have had a clue what they were getting into. Four fishermen became 'apprentices' to an itinerant leader, teacher and healer, overnight. In Mark's Gospel (Mk 1:21) the first thing they did was to accompany Jesus into the Synagogue in Capernaum, where he proceeded to break the Jewish law by healing a possessed man on the Sabbath.

There is something exciting about being a disciple, an 'apprentice' of Jesus. There is so much to learn and discover. Jesus walked around the countryside with his followers, both women and men; they were a community, a community on the move. The disciples were formed and shaped within this community.

Once Jesus died and rose from the dead, the disciples were terrified. They ran away (to Emmaus) or hid in an upper room or reverted to their previous job – seven of them went back fishing. Time after time Jesus came among them and reassured them. They were totally taken over by the Holy Spirit and began their work as missionaries; they are instructed to go out into the world and proclaim the Gospel.

We live in a very different world today. But as a result of our Baptism, we are called, gifted and sent. We too are sent into the world. We are missionaries within our local population, disciples among all the residents in our neighbourhood.

The local priest looks after the flock. We are immersed in the world; and we engage with each other, with those hurt by the Church, those separated from the Church for whatever reason and those beyond the institution of the Church. Every one of us has a particular pathway of discipleship to follow, and many of us discover it through the communities within which we live.

It is only right that we pray for more men to respond to the call of God to become ordained priests. It is also true that we all need to explore how God is calling us to make a difference in the world we live in. This calling (or vocation) may be to marriage, parenthood, the single life, nursing, policing… . God has an infinite imagination; there is a unique calling for each one of us. We become disciples when we learn to look at our world through the eyes of Jesus.

This questionnaire will help us to look at our community and discover how it can help each and every one of us become an apprentice of Jesus.

We have heard the facts and figures, the prospect of having 50 priests in our Diocese in 2030, the need for a wider variety of leadership in the Church and the very basic need to become more open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is leading us into the future.

Pope Francis gives us clear guidance when he says in *Evangelii Gaudium* (para 20):

> **"Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel".**

With this call in mind, let us begin to explore the questions before us.

*Note: Please use a maximum of **250** words in response to each of the questions.*

1 The Christian Faithful

The Christian Faithful are the heart of every worshiping community. If it is to flourish, a community needs a core of members who are committed to the Gospel of Christ and are willing to make the community a priority, giving generously of their time, imagination, gifts and other resources. A viable parish needs a healthy number of active members.

a) **How can your community look to sustain and increase the number of people worshipping with you towards 2030?**

2   Leadership

It is certain that in the future even more communities will be sharing a priest with other worshipping communities. Priests and deacons will be working more collaboratively with people. The prospect of having around 50 active priests in our Diocese in 15 years' time (2030) certainly sharpens the mind. While we must continue to pray that men will respond to the call of discipleship as ordained priests and deacons, we also need to look carefully at the development of other forms of leadership in the Church.

a)   What lay leadership is currently viable and effective in your community?

b)   For what other areas of your community life could trained lay men and women assume responsibility?

3   Active Involvement of People

In parishes where the same small, ageing group of parishioners has served the community extremely well over very many years, there may be some real anxiety about the future. As that small group retires and withdraws from active involvement, the community is at risk of floundering if younger parishioners are unable or unwilling to take their place.

a)   How diverse and active are parishioners within the community?

b)   How can the parish community invite and prepare more people to support it?

4   Worship and Spiritual Life

A flourishing community has worship at the centre of its life. The ultimate goal is to make Jesus Christ known and loved. This is why Jesus Christ is at the heart of every worshipping community. The Eucharist is the principal means in which we celebrate this. The Holy Spirit may well be leading us to discover a variety of forms of worship and devotion in the future. For this very reason a living community makes every effort to encourage parishioners of all ages and backgrounds to participate fully in prayer, devotion, worship and study.

God loves us individually. We respond to God's love in our own ways. When we come together for worship we all need to have a sense that our relationship with God is strengthened and affirmed.

a)   **Are there aspects of your community's regular worship together at Mass that are working particularly well and deepen the spiritual life of those present?**

b)   **Is there anything your community can do to encourage a deeper prayer life and engagement with Scripture?**

5 Education and Continuing Formation

A flourishing community will be able to show that the Catholic faith is handed on to children, young people and adults by means of regular programmes of religious education and Christian Formation.

a) **What good experiences has your community had in the past and what opportunities would you like to see for 'continuing formation' in the faith for members of your community?**

b) **How can closer relationships be developed between the worshipping community, the school(s) the young people attend, and the families that belong to both?**

6 Outreach

A flourishing community extends a spirit of hospitality and invites people to become members. It also looks way beyond itself to discover how the spirit of Jesus can be brought to bear on everything that concerns us in the world: our relationship with other Christian Churches, women and men of other faiths and all men and women of good will in our world.

Under this heading we include: hospitality; Ecumenism; Interfaith relationships; involvement in local social and political issues and much more. It explores the practical ways we have of becoming 'missionary disciples'.

a) **What good experiences has your community had regarding our call to be involved with other Christians, other faiths, all men and women of good will?**

b) **How can your worshipping community become more immersed in the local community?**

7   Finances

A sustainable community must have an annual income that is sufficient to cover its expenses. There needs to be a reliable level of stewardship among the faithful who willingly give of their time, gifts and energy to sustain the work of the community.

a) **How do you feel about the average weekly offertory donation in your community? Does this need to increase to enable your community to flourish in 2030?**

b) **If you are a finance-rich community, how do you feel about sharing some of your resources with very poor parts of the Diocese?**

8 Facilities

A flourishing community needs good facilities which need to be well maintained. It cannot undertake any building projects, renovations or improvements unless it has the resources to pay for them. It may be that in some places, there is a need for a plan for the community and a plan for the buildings, and they may be separate plans. It is also true to say that our buildings can be a witness to the presence of the Church in our world, or a drain on resources and energy.

a) **What sort of use can your community foresee for any unused or underused parish facilities in the future?**

b) **How can the community develop the capacity to look after its facilities in the future?**

9 Geographic Distance

A flourishing community may be influenced by its location. The proximity of neighbouring parishes can have a real impact on the vibrancy of a community. If several communities are in close proximity with large, ageing buildings that are only half-full, this will need to be taken into account when considering the future.

Our basic question is about how we can enable communities to flourish in order for us to deepen our sense of discipleship and service. Our parish churches are not private chapels maintained simply because the community has enough money to cover the expense.

a) **How does your community feel about the possibility that the only way to ensure flourishing in the future is to become part of a new parish community?**

b) **Are there ways in which your community can serve and support neighbouring communities?**

c) **If applicable, what is the relationship between different churches or Mass centres within the parish or between linked parishes?**

d) **Is/are there neighbouring parishes which would lend themselves to being linked to your parish or to becoming part of a partnership or "cluster"?**

10 Young People

Young people are not just the 'future' of the Church; they are very much part of the present. We all need to look at how actively young people are encouraged and affirmed in their contribution to the community throughout the year. The enthusiasm and energy of young people can sometimes be daunting to those who are older, but they are also signs of the Holy Spirit within us and among us.

a) What good experiences regarding Church life do the young people have in your community?

b) How can the presence and witness of young people be more encouraged and supported in the community?

11 What Else?

a) Given all the findings you have explored in Part A of this questionnaire, what would you see as the priorities to ensure a viable and flourishing community in 2030?

b) Do you have any other observations - particularly about anything we may have missed?

12 Good Practice

There is no doubt that there are some really innovative things going on within our worshipping communities from Parish Fun Days which bring together the whole community to imaginative liturgies during Holy Week; from exciting Confirmation programmes to pilgrimages and vigils.

a) **Is there something your community is involved in which will be of interest to others in the Diocese?** *Please use as much space as you need.*

Thank you for completing Section B.

The final section is brief but does need serious thought.

Part C   *Not to be completed until November 2016*
Our Parish Community's Initial Thoughts and Ideas about the Future

Based upon the wide consultation and reflection that has taken place in completing parts A and B of this questionnaire, please use this section to provide an indication of your parish community's initial thoughts about its future. You are also asked to provide information about the consultation process that has taken place to inform these views.

a) Our initial thoughts and ideas

Based on everything you have prayerfully and carefully considered so far please set out below the initial thoughts and ideas from your community about the way forward for your parish. You may also wish to provide a view about anything that is emerging regarding the ability of your parish to flourish into the future – either on its own or in conjunction with another community.

Please feel free to use as much space as you need.

Our initial thoughts and ideas (continued)

b) The Consultation Process

Please describe the process used within your parish to consult widely with the community on your responses to this question. Please include the dates of meetings and other activities you have held, their purpose and the numbers attending. Thank you.

Date of meeting or other activity	Nature of activity (e.g. open parish meeting)	Purpose of meeting / activity	Numbers attending / participating

We expect to receive completed questionnaires by 31 December 2016. We will then begin to analyse all of the findings and be back in touch with every parish once this task has been completed.

Thank you so much for all your work and observations.
We hope this whole exercise has been fruitful and enlightening.
Please continue to pray for all those involved in the next stage of Stewards of the Gospel.