

Questions, Comments and Responses from a meeting held at St. Jude's School on Sunday 29th October 2006 to discuss the proposed plan for the Solent Pastoral Area.

At the meeting questions and comments were accepted by the chair in quick succession, to allow as many people to speak as possible.

Sometimes the questions were answered by Father David or Father Joe; sometimes there was not time to answer because the next question was accepted by the chair.

Questions were accepted in the order they were raised. In reproducing the comments, questions and answers, we have tried to group similar types together, for ease of reference.

A document with the original order is available on request.

1. The centrality of the Eucharist

Q. If the centrality of the Eucharist is so important why are we reducing the number of Masses said in the area? We should be looking at ways we can all help, our sense of mission and encouraging vocations.

Q. How can knocking down our churches add to our sense of mission? The proposals go against the Bishop's plan and the call to mission and in maintaining our Christian communities.

A. There can be no mission if it is not rooted in the Eucharist.

Q. The clergy need to "let go" of some of their work and laity need formation on the centrality of the Eucharist to our faith, for adults as well as children.

A. The curia are all now lay people, not clergy, there are plans for a leadership team that will take much of the decisions for the pastoral area, but this will not in itself improve the ratio of priests to people.

Q. Why can't we have priests from other countries to boost the number of priests?

A. We have responsibilities to developing countries not to take their priests away from them. We also have to accept that this is our church, as it is now, we cannot harp back to how things used to be, we have to think about what we want in the future and act now.

Q. How do we know that there won't be more priests in the future? We could have married priests, or attitudes to gay priests could change.

A. We are an evolving church, in a secular culture. The trend in other churches, despite opening up to women or married priests has been a downward trend.

Q. Why don't we plan provision for young people with other Christian churches, an overall Youth Strategy?

Q. If the plan is driven by a shortage of priests why not try to find a solution to that problem, rather than the consequences of the issue.

A. It is too complex an issue to be treated in that way.

Q. What is the future for our church with the age profile of our priests?

Q. Could we keep the churches open and offer different forms of worship on a Sunday?

A. Not a route that is supported by the Bishop or the Vatican. These suggestions should be taken back to the Bishop for his consideration.

Q. We need to provide more support for priests and deacons.

We can celebrate our belief in any Church building.

We need to develop our sense of mission with other Christian churches.

Q. Could we share priests across parishes, giving % of priest's time, according to the needs of the community?

Q. Why can't we have priests from Eastern Europe?

Please can we future proof the plan, so that whatever we do now will be enough for the future and we won't have to keep going through pain?

Q. If we have faith we will go where we need to .If we prayed more we might get more priests.

2. Local worshipping communities

Q. The local Fareham community is a vibrant community, with many activities centred on Saint Philip Howard Church. Why does the church have to go?

A. The sale of the land where the churches stand is needed to provide the capital for the new church. Because the Bishop's pastoral Plan is based on the centrality of the Eucharist it is important to have a church with the capacity to hold as many people as possible, originally planned for 600, now thinking of 400 capacity.

Q. Why can't we retain St. Philip Howard church to service the needs of the local families and our school? St. Philip Howard Church has always been considered by the parish as the church for young people. It was built by the parish of Sacred Heart in Fareham to service the community. They consider it a very valuable church.

A. The relationship with our school is very important and this will be taken into consideration.

Q. What specifically is the future of Our Lady of Walsingham Church and the community that worship there?

A. We also have to accept that this is our church, as it is now, we cannot harp back to how things used to be, we have to think about what we want in the future and act now.

Q. The plan appears to be an attempt at rationalisation, considering the demographics of the laity as well as priests. Why can't we use other Christian Churches in the area and share the cost of the buildings with them, whilst still providing Sunday Mass.

Q. Is Our Lady of Walsingham Church "Doomed"? Providing a new church won't attract young people back into the church.

A. We are listening to what you want, come up with some better ideas and we can talk about them.

Q. Have you considered the support needed for those people who lose their local church?

A. People could form their own prayer groups and other support groups.

Q. Our young people and young families would be unwilling to travel to another place, what they might need is more spiritual guidance.

Q. We want to maintain the viability of our communities, we don't want to see them being destroyed.

Q. If we knock down Our Lady of Walsingham Church we would be knocking down God's House. Would the Blessed Sacrament be available at other times of the week, for private adoration and prayer?

A. In an ideal world we would keep all 9 churches open. The wisest way forward may be our second option, Look back at the Bishop's Pastoral Plan, all the ideas generated today can take this forward. Perhaps we need to go more slowly and take care of our communities.

Q. To develop our sense of community we need to retain our buildings as community centres and a place for the Blessed Sacrament.

A. The buildings are in need of structural repair, some are passed repair. We need a lot more money if we are going to keep them.

Q. We have heard at this meeting that there are problems with the church building in Stubbington, this was known years ago, when the church was in the design stages, but this was ignored. What are the problems now; we have wasted a lot of money on this building.

Q. the links between St. Philip Howard Church and St. Jude's school are very important to us. What's wrong with the building, tell us and we'll get the money to pay for it!

Q. If we all think the 2nd option is the best will you go with that?

A. It's not our decision; we have to go with what you want. The Bishop will want to know what his people want. We will have to reach a consensus.

3. The decision making process

Q. As part of the sounding out process could we look at other churches and find out what processes work or what mistakes have been made by other groups?

Q. Could each parish group be provided with the comments and questions raised at this meeting, with a copy of a synopsis of the presentations given, so that they could discuss the plan and provide feedback "from the roots" to help gain a real consensus position?

4. General Practicalities

Q. What is the timeframe for the plan?

A. As soon as possible, once a consensus has been reached on what we should do.

Q. Is money the driving force for the changes?

A. The sale of the land where the churches stand is needed to provide the capital for the new church. Because the Bishop's pastoral Plan is based on the centrality of the Eucharist it is important to have a church with the capacity to hold as many people as possible, originally planned for 600, now thinking of 400 capacity.

Q. Has there been a survey done of the current church sites? Why can't we extend one of our existing churches to provide more capacity?

A. That could be an option.

Q. What is Fareham Council's Strategy Plan for the area is Broadlaw Walk going to be developed for housing?

A. The Borough Council has been consulted.

Q. Where exactly is the site of the proposed new church?

A. We are still looking at a number of possible sites, somewhere roughly in the centre of our Pastoral Area.

Q. has the clergy tried to find local financial support to develop the existing church buildings or to build a new church if that is to go ahead.

No, the new church would be funded from raising capital from the sale of land where the existing churches stand.

Q. What is the cost of the proposed plan?

A. Taking advice, outside of the expertise of the clergy team.

Q. Why can't we just develop what we've got?

A. The buildings are in need of structural repair, some are passed repair. We need a lot more money if we are going to keep them.

Q. We could all provide help, both practical and financial, what do you need?

Q. could we have more information on the spending on our churches and proper details from a survey of the state of repairs and structure of the buildings, these should be made available to our parishioners.

Q. Fareham Borough Council have a substantial development planned for Bishopsfield Road. This growth to the potential congregation should be taken into account.

Q. We must take responsibility for our own church buildings. People, not priests should be worrying about this. Priests should be able to concentrate on their priestly duties; we should do what we can do.

Q. Why don't we plan provision for young people with other Christian churches, an overall Youth Strategy?

5. Outreach, Other Christian denominations

Q. Why can't we copy the other Christian churches and reaffirm our Faith, for instance through the Alpha Course?

A. There is a difference in our style of mission.

Q. We need to provide more support for priests and deacons.

We can celebrate our belief in any Church building.

We need to develop our sense of mission with other Christian churches.

Q. What is the process for consultation and involvement in the decision making process?

A. We are sounding out people's thoughts and feelings, through a series of meetings in the existing parishes. We will do our best to keep people informed and involved. There appears to be a growing consensus about the second plan being appropriate at this time. Our own decision making process is evolving our leadership team needs to be developed.

6. Other comments

Q. Experience of Larger Communities whilst in Holland. There was no feeling of belonging. Smaller communities provide this sense of belonging and caring.

Q. Do the schools figure in this plan, how can you sell the church land without the school land?

A. No, the schools are not part of the plan.

Q. People already move between parishes and churches. We have to maintain our faith, despite changes.

Q. Church is not bricks and mortar, but if we take the buildings away, what message are we sending to our local Community?