



Fr Paul Mason
Episcopal Vicar for Kent

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Dear parishioners of the Dover Deanery,

Last October we embarked upon an exercise of consultation with a view to responding to Archbishop Peter's request to look at deanery rationalisation. Patterns of migration, population shift, number of buildings and available priests constitute several factors in an ever-changing equation which must be reviewed periodically in order to ensure we are making the most of our available resources.

After our initial meeting with priests and lay representatives, the consultation was then taken to each parish which was tasked with responding to set questions on the subject of rationalisation. Many people took part in these consultations and I would like to thank you all for the active and supportive interest you showed in this important matter.

What follows is a the summary report of the final meeting held in Aylesham on 12 April 2015. The priests of the deanery, plus 2 lay representatives from each parish, were all given copies of the parish reports. These were summarised at the meeting before breaking into mixed parish groups to respond to 4 questions:

1. which parishes could potentially be amalgamated?
2. could the number of Mass centres be reduced? Where?
3. where is a reduction in the number of Masses possible, or a better coordination of Mass times achievable?
4. what creative/realistic suggestions do you have?

Inevitably, any suggestion of amalgamation or change to the *status quo* is usually met with alarm, especially so when it involves our place of worship. Needless to say, there is a temptation for every parish to see itself as a special case, which is why such an open deanery discussion was called for in order to obtain a wider perspective. It is also important to note that while it is not the only element to consider, it must be borne in mind that the Diocese will not be able to guarantee that every parish in the deanery will always have its own priest. Being forewarned helps us to be forearmed.

In the midst of these discussions, however, we must not lose sight of the fact that all we do must be seen in the context evangelization. Good stewardship of our resources is not an end in itself but is ultimately at the service of our purpose: to bring the Good News to our own corner of the vineyard.

So please take heart, the findings of the consultation do not mean that plans will instantly be made to put them into action. Rather, as things develop in the deanery, as priests retire and move on for example, we now have a sense of the possibilities for rationalisation and can approach the evolving situation more proactively and will have a starting point for further discussion at the appropriate time.

I trust these findings will stimulate further discussion, bring forth constructive suggestions and help you prepare for any future changes that will need to be made. It is also my hope that this process will help you develop your sense of being a deanery, working more effectively together than as individual parishes.

With thanks again for your support in this consultation and I wish you all the blessings of Eastertide.

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