

**Statement from the Dean to all Parishes in Derby Deanery  
following consultation with the Clergy of the Deanery  
1st Sunday of Advent 2016**

The Derby Deanery of Priests and Deacons met 17/18th November to reflect on how best to implement the instruction from Bishop Patrick to plan for the future. This reflection continues the process which began four years ago with "Living Stones". Every Diocese in the country is going through a similar process and every Deanery in the Diocese has been requested by the Bishop to have similar discussions and make appropriate recommendations for the future.

Part of the process of planning is to look to our own situation as priests and deacons. Of the eleven priests in Derby Deanery four are aged over 70. In the longer term this will require us to review how we operate as clergy. With this review we will also need to consider how we can more effectively encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Equally important is how we work together with the laity in each parish in order to arrive at an arrangement that is realistic and which respects the gifts within each community - a process which has already begun in all local parishes and is reflected in the work of Derby Deanery Pastoral Council.

The recent discussion by Derby clergy included the question of how best we might review the number of churches and Masses. At this stage we will need to have further conversation with Bishop Patrick prior to our suggestions being made public for more general discussion. As priests of Derby Deanery we consider it important, however, to let all parishioners know of the process which is taking place. It is a difficult process which has been made easier by the unanimity among the clergy as to what recommendations we make to Bishop Patrick.