

Part H – Step A – The Parish Return Form

Sections 1-5 to be completed and returned by 23rd April 2026

Section 1: Introduction

In dialogue with your community, especially young people (in line with synod guidance) reflect on your local data sheets alongside the diocesan context. Please summarise your reflections from Part E, F and G by completing this template and returning it by 23 April 2026 to discernment.returns@diocesehn.org.uk

‘May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us.’

PARISH NAME:	Our Lady and St Philip Neri
PARISH TOWN:	Gateshead
PARTNERSHIP:	John Ingram
DEANERY:	South Tyneside and Gateshead
<p>What was the process followed to reach these conclusions? <i>E.g. clergy & laity involved, young people’s voices considered, prayer & listening shaped decisions:</i></p> <p>The process consisted of:</p> <p>a) Establishing a ‘Pastoral Strategy Facilitation Team’ to co-ordinate and facilitate the process. This comprised of our two priests, representatives of our Parish Pastoral Council (including parishioners from each of our 3 churches and the Head Teacher of one of our primary schools) as well as a young person who is active in our parish. This group agreed the approach we would take, facilitated the various parish meetings we held, and collated questionnaire responses.</p> <p>b) Holding 4 open parish meetings to which all parishioners were invited. Each of these meetings lasted around two hours and started and ended with a time of collective prayer and worship. The first meeting set out the context of the Pastoral Strategy and Parish Discernment process and introduced ‘Conversations in the Spirit’. The second focussed on Mission - following presentation of relevant parish data, discussion groups each considered one of the 4 areas of Mission set out within the Toolkit. The third meeting took a similar approach in relation to Stewardship, while the final meeting gave us the</p>	

opportunity to present a draft version of the 'Parish Return Form' to parishioners who provided feedback which influenced this final version.

- c) Producing a questionnaire that gave everyone the opportunity to contribute to the process – either online or using a hardcopy version of the form. This covered the areas of Mission and Stewardship and asked respondents to consider what was going well in the parish as well as the challenges and concerns about future sustainability. The key messages from the questionnaire have also helped to shape our discernment and this response.

Beacons of Mission: *Practices that either show signs of hope others could learn from, or faithful responses uniquely shaped by your local context:*

One particular area of parish life that was highlighted by a number of people as something we do well is the area of 'Outreach' which is carried out in a variety of ways including:

- Our 'Gift for Life' initiative where, through the ongoing generosity of parishioners, we are able to fund projects for vulnerable people in India and Kenya, as well as our local Justice and Peace Refugee Project, to the tune of almost £8,000 annually
- Our parish foodbank which provides vital support to 18 local families each month and which is supplemented at Christmas with additional seasonal fayre and gifts
- The 'Angel Tree' where parishioners purchase gifts suitable for children of various ages which are distributed by Social Services to disadvantaged families across the Gateshead area
- Our regular financial contribution to the 'Joe's Place' drop-in project based at St Joseph's Church in Gateshead and our donations to the 'Green Pastures' Project that takes place within the John Ingram Partnership.

Section 2: Mission Discernment

Please use the suggested prompts at **Part E of The Mission Discernment Toolkit** to guide your conversations and complete the following section.

Mission: WORSHIP - Celebrating the Sacraments as Places of Encounter

Reflection and conclusions:

The overall consensus is that our parish worship is a good and prayerful experience throughout the year, with particular mention of Holy Week and

Christmas services. We feel very fortunate to have Fr Peter and Fr Endre as our priests and we very much appreciate everything they do for the parish and for each one of us.

Parishioners are concerned about the dwindling numbers attending our churches, which are lower than pre-Covid levels. They see this as a combination of an ageing population, the increasing lack of younger people attending and people choosing more secular lifestyles.

There is a view that Mass attendance is not the only way we can promote encounter. We can explore different approaches to prayer and worship for all ages and consider how parish services can be made more relevant while continuing to convey the importance of the sacraments. A particular focus of discussion was attracting more young people and families to attend through stronger links with our schools as well as through services and activities that are shaped by and geared towards this group.

1. What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

Now: We will focus on:

- Welcoming people back to church through making our services more relevant, particularly to younger people
- Building closer links between the parish and our schools
- Focussing on the elderly and house-bound to make worship more accessible for them
- Placing a renewed emphasis on children's liturgy and preparation for the sacraments.
- Exploring the needs and expectations of people in each age group within our parish community.

Longer-term:

- We feel that we should have more family-orientated services, encouraging younger parishioners to take a leadership role so they can suggest the best ways to draw others into our churches.
- This will require strong co-ordination with the Parish Pastoral Council taking a lead in encouraging parishioners, particularly younger people, to play their part.

2. Why are we proposing this? (Link to Mission.)

Our parishioners have highlighted the importance of drawing families and younger people to church. To build and sustain a vibrant parish we need younger people to take on leadership and help shape our future direction.

3. Dependencies: (What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)

This approach will require a more diverse and inclusive range of church services to allow young people to decide how they want to express and live their faith. Social activities that help people to experience faith and fellowship will also be essential. We will need more volunteers who are willing to play a role in supporting new ways of promoting Mission.

We also need to focus on older parishioners and the housebound and find options for them to continue to live their faith and share their wisdom and experience with younger generations. We need to explore practical ways to enable older parishioners to come to church, or take services to them, so they still feel they are an important part of our parish community.

4. What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

The numbers of Mass-goers will decline further as parishioners die or become unable to come to church due to physical and/or travel constraints.

5. How will worship be organised in the area if there are fewer priests and fewer worshippers?

Stronger lay involvement across all aspects of parish life is essential for any change. In addition to increasing volunteering, we may also need to consider some paid roles to co-ordinate and develop key aspects of parish life.

Mission: TEACH - Handing on the Faith

Reflection and conclusions:

Nurturing our own faith and handing on the faith to others is a central part of the mission of the Church. As well as reaching out to those who currently do not attend our churches we are called to deepen and enrich our own faith and for this to 'spill over' to those around us.

The strong role of our schools in passing on the faith to young people was highlighted and parishioners expressed their appreciation of the excellent work that takes place.

With declining numbers, we require creative ways to draw people in through better communication and engagement. Parishioners felt that stronger links with our primary and secondary schools, developing leaders and making our services more joyful were all important considerations.

If we are to be effective at handing on the Faith to others we need to be nurtured and fed ourselves and we need inspirational teachers and catechists to 'spread the Good News'.

1. What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

Now:

- Increase the focus on younger people, working more effectively with schools and giving them a leadership role within parishes
- Draw in families through family-orientated services and activities
- Re-establish children's liturgy in our churches
- Recruit and train more catechists.

Longer term:

- Draw in the communities around our churches through activities that serve their practical needs, demonstrating our faith in action.

2. Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

The numbers of people attending church services is declining and people are choosing to live more secular lives. We need to communicate the importance of faith and mission.

3. Dependencies: (*What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*)

We need more flexibility to enable young people to lead on services and more lay people willing to support this change.

We also need a joint approach across the John Ingram Partnership to establish stronger links with secondary schools.

We need to develop intergenerational activities to enable older parishioners to pass on their wisdom and experience to younger generations. This will also allow for continuity while bringing in innovation in worship.

4. What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

Numbers will further decline as current Mass-goers grow older, or are unable to travel to Mass.

Mission: SERVE - Sharing Christ's Love in Action

Reflection and conclusions:

There is much happening within our parish that demonstrates 'Faith in Action' and highlights the amazing generosity of parishioners. These activities include a food bank, social outreach support through *Gift for Life* in India, Kenya and locally through the Justice and Peace Refugee Project, and a 'Love Christmas' programme that includes gifts for disadvantaged children from our 'Angel Tree' and hampers for families benefitting from our foodbank. We also provide financial support to the 'Joe's Place' and 'Green Pastures' initiatives within the John Ingram Partnership.

Of course, there is always more that is possible and we feel that it is important to encourage greater connection with the wider local community, including other Christian churches and other faith groups. These activities will need human and financial resources and strong co-ordination. The cost-of-living crisis makes it difficult for parishioners to contribute more, so we will need to find other ways of generating resources. We could also be better at communicating our outreach activity - raising its profile, explaining its impact and attracting more people to support it.

1. What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

Now:

- Continue with the above activities as they are delivering a good impact for vulnerable people both here and overseas
- Make connections with others in the wider local community with a view to understanding community needs, the range of existing activity and areas for potential collaboration
- Open up our social activities (coffee mornings, social events and other relevant activities) for the wider community to attend
- Communicate more clearly what our parish is doing to serve others and seek involvement of more parishioners, including younger people, in this work.

Longer term:

- As part of a detailed property review we will look at how to use our buildings in better ways to welcome and show hospitality to others and demonstrate what we are able to contribute to the local community.

2. Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

We want to be Christian role models, demonstrating God's love in very practical ways by supporting some of the most vulnerable people - whether on the other side of the world or on the other side of the street. In doing so we might just influence others to explore the Faith.

We have buildings that are not used to full capacity so they could be utilised for activities that benefit the community. Perhaps our buildings could be used by other faith groups to hold their services, or we can enable groups to use the buildings for other wellbeing activities.

3. Dependencies: (*What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*)

If we want to draw in more people and organise new activities this will need careful consideration, risk assessment, and additional human and financial resources.

4. What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

'Business as usual' will simply consolidate the current status quo with the danger of making our Faith irrelevant in the years to come.

Mission: COMMUNITY – Building a Family of Faith

Reflection and conclusions:

Parishioners believe that our churches are welcoming places of worship with lay people and clergy greeting people as they arrive and depart. Comments were made about feeling 'part of a family' and that the 3 churches in our parish increasingly feel more 'connected'.

There is also the view that we can do even better - with each one of us seeing 'welcoming' as our personal responsibility and, as a parish, seeking more opportunities to strengthen our 'family ties'.

More attention needs to be given to parishioners who are unable to come to church and who may feel isolated and ignored.

Clergy and the small number of lay volunteers are now very stretched and we need to increase involvement of more parishioners.

There is interest among some parishioners to link more pro-actively, ecumenically with other Christian denominations, as well as with other non-Christian faiths. Many are facing the same challenges as we are so there is good reason to work together.

We have the potential to become more vibrant, and parishioners have many good ideas, but we need their real commitment and practical involvement if we are to fulfil this potential. We also need strong co-ordination and leadership so it is now time to reinvigorate our Parish Pastoral Council and welcome new members.

1. What are we proposing to do? Concrete actions: (*Distinguish what you will do now, next, over a longer journey and who is responsible for leading it.*)

Now:

- Re-energise our Parish Pastoral Council and seek new members
- Undertake a parish 'census' and audit and of skills to identify the wealth of gifts and talents sitting in our pews – and encourage the use of these talents to develop and enrich our community
- Explore the needs and expectations of all age groups within the parish community
- Develop better communications channels to keep people up to date and seek their involvement
- Increase the number of social activities to help build stronger ties between parishioners
- Organise and/or be part of ecumenical services in our area.

Longer term:

- Develop a programme of training and support for laity involved in various activities.

2. Why are we proposing this? (*Link to Mission.*)

We need to build on our positive actions. Working ecumenically, and with other faiths, will also help draw the community in, support their needs, and create a more vibrant community of people who care for each other.

3. Dependencies: *What will be needed to make this happen? (E.g. people, formation, finances, property decisions, Bishop approval, other parishes co-operating.)*

We need more lay people to get involved at all levels – current volunteers are too stretched and pulled in different directions, which is not sustainable.

4. What will be the outcome if this action cannot happen?

We will stagnate as a Church and will ultimately be forced to take harder decisions of closure in a shorter timescale.

Section 3 – Stewardship and Our Common Home (Property)

Accessibility (to be completed by Parish)

Site Name	Building Name	Estimated Occupancy Capacity	Estimated hours of use per week	Estimated number of car parking spaces	Level access into and within the building (Yes/No)	Accessible WC within the building (Yes/No)	% of people travelling by car	Describe local public transport links
Gateshead Our Lady and St Phlip Neri Parish	Immaculate Heart of Mary Church (with, organ loft, basic kitchen and meeting room for approx 12 people)	194 + 65 chairs around church +12 in choir loft +12 on sanctuary Total =283	4/5	12 + on street parking A grassed area is available which could be developed as a car park area in future if necessary	Y	2 One of which has disabled access	75/80%	<p>Bus No 96 Travels between Lobley Hill and Dunston</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday once per hour • During week twice per hour <p>Bus 301 Travels between Lobley Hill and Whickham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday once per hour • During week 3 times per hour <p>Bus No 69 Travels between Lobley Hill and Whickham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every day, once per hour <p>On its journey this bus passes St Anne's, Winlaton and St Joseph's, Blaydon</p> <p>Buses X70, X71, X72</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Sunday Service except for X72

								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekdays, at most hourly and irregular • X70/71 passes Sacred Heart, Byermoor
Dunston	St Philip Neri Church	<p>179 seats + space for an additional 24 seats.</p> <p>Therefore possible total of 203</p>	3/4 although is occasionally used by Primary School	16 Car Park and 30+ in school yard. However both only available during weekends and school holidays	Y	1 toilet, with disabled facility	90% +	<p>Bus X30</p> <p>Travels between Whickham and Dunston</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday once per hour • Rest of Week twice per hour <p>Bus No 6</p> <p>Travels between lower end of Dunston and Whickham</p> <p>7 days per week, once per hour, occasionally less than an once an hour (1hr 10mins).</p> <p>This bus also passes Sacred Heart Byermoor</p> <p>Bus No 96</p> <p>Travels between Lobley Hill and Dunston</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday once per hour • During week twice per hour <p>Buses X70,X71,X72</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Sunday Service • Weekdays, at most hourly and irregular
Whickham	St Mary's Church	320	4 + additional occasional	17+2 disabled. School yard approx. 40 spaces available	Y	2	75/80%	<p>Bus 301</p> <p>Travels between Lobley Hill and Whickham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday once per hour

	(with possible meeting room adjacent to the church)		use by Primary School	at weekends and school holidays				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During week 3 times per hour <p>Bus No 69 Travels between Lobley Hill and Whickham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every day, once per hour <p>On its journey this bus passes St Anne's, Winlaton and St Joseph's, Blaydon</p> <p>Buses X70,X71,X72</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Sunday Service • Weekdays, at most hourly and irregular
Whickham	St Mary's Hall	100	28	Shared with St Mary's Church (see above)	Ramp available otherwise 3 /4 steps	5 + 1 disabled + 2 urinals	N/A	
Whickham	Presbytery	Family Rental	NA	Garage	NA	NA	NA	
Whickham	Dockendale Cottage	Rental	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	

Notes: **Estimated occupancy capacity** – This is simply intended to be a reasonable estimate of the capacity of our churches, halls and meeting spaces. In the future it may be necessary to check these capacity figures against the site Fire Risk Assessment the survey programme for which is currently underway across our Diocese.

Existing and potential future uses (to be completed by Parish)

Site Name:	Building Name	Existing uses	Potential future uses
St Philip Neri	Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church Services and Primary School Children's Services 	Will be considered in detail as part of a full parish property review
Immaculate Heart of Mary	Church and Presbytery	<p>Presbytery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priest's Residence and Parish Office <p>Church</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church Services • Coffee after Sunday Mass and monthly after weekday Mass • Craft Club • Foodbank 	Will be considered in detail as part of a full parish property review
St Mary's, Whickham	<p>Church</p> <p>Presbytery</p> <p>Church Hall</p> <p>Dockendale Cottage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church Services and Primary School Childrens Services • Currently rented out to tenants. • Space commercially rented (Moday to Friday during term time) for school club. • Keep Fit Class • Monthly teas and coffee after Sunday Mass • Occasional Lunch Club and other hiring • Parish meetings and events • Currently rented out to tenants 	Will be considered in detail as part of a full parish property review

Section 4: Stewardship Review Discernment

Please use the suggested prompts at **Part F of The Mission Discernment Toolkit** to guide your conversations and complete the following section.

Stewardship: FINANCES

Please summarise your conclusions based on F1. discussions

The present financial position in the parish is deemed to be a positive one with reserves currently standing at around £270,000. We have a strong Parish Finance Committee which draws upon the hard work, financial expertise and relevant qualifications of its members. The Finance Committee aims to meet on a quarterly basis (or as required), sometimes through electronic means, to monitor and review the finances and make decisions about proposed expenditure.

Parish finances are transparent, with the Finance Committee reporting regularly in writing to the parish as a whole and key financial information is summarised in the parish newsletter. As part of this discernment process a member of the Finance Committee presented a comprehensive financial picture at one of our open parish meetings and all present were able to ask questions to clarify their understanding.

In theory, the parish is financially sustainable over the next 5 years but, should we decide to retain all of our existing buildings and ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose, we will face significant repair costs. The current estimate here is in the region of £280,000 – indicating that, should parish income remain the same as at present, we would rapidly deplete the reserves that we have – potentially making it difficult to utilise funds on Mission-related developments.

Stewardship: BUILDINGS

Please summarise your conclusions based on F2. discussions

We have the following buildings to consider:

- St Philip Neri Church
- Immaculate Heart Church
- Immaculate Heart Presbytery
- St Mary's Church
- St Mary's Presbytery
- St Mary's Church Hall
- Dockendale Cottage

Our buildings – and particularly our churches - can both strengthen and drain our mission.

They strengthen it by being the sacred gathering places for the three worshipping communities within our parish. For many years, they have been important focal points for local families for regular worship and for key points in their faith journey – whether baptisms, first holy communions, confirmations, weddings or funerals. As such, they are special places with strong emotional attachments for many.

They can also potentially, and very quickly, drain our mission in that the ongoing upkeep and expected repairs over the next 5 years are estimated to cost around £280,000 – in effect wiping out the significant reserves that we currently have. This presents a dilemma for the parish with mixed views on how we address it.

The churches are each used on average for around 4 hours each week – mainly for Masses and other services. Overall, they are underused with a combined capacity of around 800 and an average total attendance of around 266 each weekend across the 3 churches. The maximum distance between any two of our 3 churches is 1.7 miles.

Opinions were divided equally among those who attended the Stewardship meeting as to whether or not we should repair and retain our 3 churches or seriously consider closing one or more of these - although over half of those present agreed with the suggestion that we should reduce the number of buildings we have. Also, well over half of the questionnaire respondents who answered the question *‘What do you feel may no longer be sustainable in the mid- to long term?’* highlighted that having 3 churches was likely to be unsustainable over this period.

Some of our buildings in Whickham (i.e. St Mary’s Presbytery, St Mary’s Church Hall and Dockendale Cottage), currently act as sources of income although there was a view that the level of income has the potential to be increased.

Given the above context, and in the spirit of good stewardship, we feel that an important next step is to undertake a thorough property review to ensure that we make the right decisions to provide sustainability going forward. We will co-ordinate this review with other parishes in our Partnership as appropriate.

Stewardship: PEOPLE

Please summarise your conclusions based on F3. discussions and the following questions:

The parish is very fortunate to have a group of dedicated volunteers who give freely of their time and energy to help with many aspects of the life of our community. However, the group is small in number and the age profile is increasing. There was a strong consensus that we now need to engage more and younger volunteers to ensure sustainability. We need to be clear about what specific support is required and communicate this well using personal invitations

as well as more general 'calls to action.' We need to shift the mindset to one where the future of our parish is seen as everyone's responsibility.

At the same time, it will be important to provide development opportunities so that parishioners can identify the particular gifts they have, and to develop their knowledge and skills and so maximise their contribution. We feel that a key part of this approach will be participation in the diocesan '*Called and Gifted*' programme. This would help parishioners to identify their charisms and energise them to become volunteers, making the parish more vibrant and outward looking and more attractive to others.

As part of the process of looking 'beyond the walls of our churches' it was suggested that there is a need for a group of volunteers to identify and address needs in the wider community.

How does your parish benefit from its Parish Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council?

We have a strong Finance Committee which draws upon the hard work and financial expertise and qualifications of its members. We are confident that the financial stewardship of the parish is in safe hands. The Finance Committee reports regularly in writing to the parish as a whole and key financial information is summarised in the parish newsletter.

We have a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) with members drawn from each of our 3 churches, our Finance Committee and our two Primary Schools. The PPC is facilitated by a very competent lay chair and, in the past, the group has been an active body where key parish issues have been considered and recommendations made. In recent years, meetings have been few and, as a result, the group has become much less relevant in the parish. This is an area that we will need to address going forward.

Does your parish have active representation on the Partnership Development Group?

We are represented on the John Ingram Partnership Development Group – both by our Parish Priest and a member of our Parish Pastoral Council. Deputies are also in place should our main lay representative be unable to attend.

Are there potential lay leaders in the parish and would they be willing to be trained?

We have a small number of trained lay leaders within the parish although, at present, they are not used in this capacity. As part of our desire to encourage, support and develop more volunteers to serve the parish in various capacities this is an important area to focus upon.

Stewardship: SUSTAINABILITY

Please summarise your conclusions based on F4. discussions

The issue of sustainability in relation to the various elements of our Mission and Stewardship was a central theme both within the open parish meetings and in the questionnaire responses.

Looking ahead, we need to be very mindful of the decreasing number of priests available to serve parishes across the Diocese and the vital importance of their care and wellbeing. The number of Masses each week in our parish is a relevant consideration here, as is the number of churches - both of which need to be reviewed as part of a realistic sustainability plan for the parish.

There was a clear consensus that we cannot continue to expect our priests to take on more and more activity and that we now need to encourage an attitude of collective responsibility for sustaining and developing our parish. Developing a clear strategy for engaging more and younger volunteers will be a key part of being sustainable.

There was a view expressed that some of our buildings could generate more income than they do at present – and this issue will be considered during our property review.

We aim to be seen as a welcoming prayerful community where God's love is translated into concrete action and where people genuinely care about one another. If viewed in this way by the wider community we will be a force for good in the local area.

What is your assessment on sustaining current mission provision over the next 10 years?

We are optimistic about our ability to sustain and even increase our mission as a parish over the next 10 years. However, this cannot happen without significant change across several aspects of our current approach. We have many positive things to draw upon which give us a strong foundation – our dedicated priests, our gifted volunteers, our generous parishioners and resources that, if managed wisely, can be used for growing and nurturing our mission. Now is the time to 'awaken the sleeping giant' that is our parish and to utilise our collective gifts to serve God in new and exciting ways.

Section 5: Snapshot Summary and Parish Conclusions

Please refer to **Part G of The Mission Discernment Toolkit** to guide your conversations and complete the following section. Provide clear, honest, and prayerful conclusions.

What is thriving and must be strengthened?

- Our outreach activities are a strong aspect of our Mission and should be supported to grow and develop further.
- We are viewed by many as a 'Welcoming Parish' – which gives us a solid foundation on which to build an even stronger 'sense of belonging' and the ability to reach out into the wider community.
- Our two thriving primary schools are a huge asset to our parish and creating even stronger links with them and the local secondary school would be of mutual benefit.

What should be adjusted?

There are several areas that need to be reviewed and adjusted if we are truly to thrive as a parish. These include the Parish Pastoral Council; Property arrangements; Communications; Volunteers; Community and Ecumenical links; and exploring the needs and expectations of all age groups within the parish.

What drains Mission, is unsustainable, and needs to be released?

The costs of building repairs going forward is a concern as this would rapidly deplete the significant level of reserves we have and so drain our Mission. Whether or not to retain all 3 of our churches is an issue that has divided opinion in the parish and so it is important to take a careful and prayerful approach in arriving at wise, long-term decisions.

Where is the Holy Spirit prompting bold steps?

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the power of your love...

We feel that the Holy Spirit has been guiding our parish throughout this process of discernment and that He is now prompting us to be bold in two main areas:

- To undertake a thorough, honest and forward-looking review of our property in order to ensure that any arrangements are sustainable for at least the next 10 years.
- To encourage a sense of shared responsibility for the future of our parish – engaging more and diverse volunteers, attracting more worshippers and becoming a beacon of hope in our wider communities.

What are our next steps as a parish?

- We will re-energise our **Parish Pastoral Council**
- We will undertake a detailed **Property Review** and take any hard decisions that are necessary for the parish to be sustainable and vibrant. This will include reviewing the number of Masses provided in our churches.
- We will put in place a **new approach to volunteering** which recruits, supports and develops volunteers, drawing upon the *Called and Gifted* programme. A parish census and skills audit will be undertaken as an integral part of this work, as will training of more catechists.
- We will seek to engage **young people and families** through joyful worship and social events and stronger links with our schools.
- We will explore the **needs and expectations** of each of the age groups in our parish community.
- We will consider the needs of the **vulnerable and marginalised** and those who find it difficult to travel to our churches.
- We will **review our communications** as a parish and seek ways of communicating better both internally and with the wider community.
- We will use these 'next steps' as the starting point for producing a more **detailed action plan** for a thriving and vibrant parish community.

A REMINDER OF NEXT STEPS

Once completed, the parish should **submit this Part H** which is a summary of findings from The Local Mission Discernment (Part E), The Stewardship Review (Part F), and The Parish Snapshot Summary and Conclusions (Part G) to **discernment.returns@diocesehn.org.uk** by **23rd April 2026**.