



Parish Plans

Introduction

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The point of parish activity, certainly in the areas of Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation, is to bring people to intimacy and communion with Jesus Christ. Whatever we do, this is our goal. The encouragement to have Parish Plans, and to appoint both Parish Leads and Deanery Mentors, is to keep this need, to introduce people to Jesus and to deepen their love and knowledge of him, at the front of our minds and enable it to happen.

Archbishop John wrote, 'It is often tempting just to repeat what has been done before, or to focus primarily on implementing the things that are practical, procedural, and regulatory. These latter things are important, but, this year, I want to encourage you to think again with a missionary heart; to look at your parish and community and try to discern how things might grow and move forward in new ways.'

The parish, 'while it remains an indispensable institution to encounter Christ and to have a living relationship with Him and with our brothers and sisters in the faith,' must 'explore creatively new ways and methods that allow it to be at the height of its primary function, that is, being a force of evangelisation' (*Pastoral Conversion* 122).

Why Plans?

Some Definite Service is the diocesan-wide approach for parish growth in evangelisation, catechesis, and formation supported through local people, plans, and prayer. Each parish is being asked to develop a plan supported by a network of volunteers, lay and ordained.

No parish is the same and we have a diverse range across the diocese. Each parish has its own history, its own resources and its own particular vision. It is important, therefore, that each parish formulates its own plan by reflecting and considering the good work already undertaken whilst also looking to see the areas where growth is possible.

While it is the task of the priest to keep alive the dynamic of mission in the parish, allowing the 'diversity of vocations and ministries in the parish to grow and mature' (PC 39) there is also a role for consultative bodies, such as the parish pastoral council and finance committees, to highlight and realise the role played by lay people in the evangelising mission of the parish (PC 110).

Parish plans will focus on the three areas of Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation.

Recognising the unique gifts and challenges within each parish, these plans should be strategic and 'live' – encouraging ongoing consultation, reflection, review and action. In so doing, each parish is to be a 'living sign of the proximity of Christ' (PC 19).

We also believe that discerning a vision, understanding our reality and developing these simple plans should serve our collective response to *Called to Bear Fruit* (C2BF) and broader renewal.

Building on what has come before

The Synod Process encouraged many opportunities for spiritual conversations and a prayerful discernment of next steps. It also highlighted various challenges and opportunities in those parishes that participated. In terms of Evangelisation, Catechesis and adult Formation, you may already have determined priorities and started appropriate action, including the appointment of Parish Leads in the three areas. These can be included, naturally, in your Plan.

Section 2 will give you an idea of how to get started and the additional support on offer.

Getting Started

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These materials have been created to **support a planning process in a small group setting**. They are the fruit of pilot planning processes which took place in 2022/23 and benefit from their wisdom.

You may feel suitably prepared to create your plan from the outset. Perhaps this is something you do already and can simply record your existing plans using the online form.

Equally, together with your Parish Leads and others in your parish, you may wish to examine the online form (<https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/our-parish-plan>) and devise your own pattern to see what might be undertaken for the coming year in Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation (giving some thought to ongoing review and development).

The plan can include what you already do. However, you are encouraged to try to think creatively about how you would like to move your parish forward, with all its own particularities, gifts and people.

If you need some additional support...

You may desire or require additional support in the creation of your parish plan. To this end, the Agency would like to highlight some options:

Initial Direct Support

Enrol a group of people from your parish (ideally between 4 to 10 people, including Parish Leads, if possible) to attend one of the upcoming 'activation days' which will offer facilitated conversations and practical sessions towards the development of your plan.

- Wednesday 25 October 2023 - Amigo Hall
- Saturday 4 November 2023 - St Mary's, West Croydon
- Saturday 20 January 2024 - St Theresa's, Ashford

These days are intended to provide a clear context and set the ball rolling for further parish discussions. Please note that we can offer just six parishes a place on each of the dates. You can book your parish's place via the Agency's website: <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/our-parish-plan>

Fully Accompanied Parish-based Process

We also have a limited capacity to support individual parishes in the development of a plan (which comprises, at least, four evening sessions - SDS, VISION, REALITY, PLAN for each of the three areas: Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation). During the pilot planning process, such support has proved helpful in discerning unforeseen needs and the development of creative solutions.

If fully accompanied support is needed, please email aec@rcaos.org.uk

Surgeries with Agency Team Members

Each of these surgeries will be a maximum of one hour long and are bookable via email: aec@rcaos.org.uk. We aim to have, at a minimum, 72 hours of advisors' time available for these surgery calls over the next two months.

Eight Essentials to Remember

1. The Lord has a plan for your Parish and as such, prayer is central to this process.
2. Pick your team prayerfully and carefully.
3. If you get this right, you will be able to draw others, especially those not already committed, but able, into this work. If you do this, you no longer have to do it all yourself.
4. Growth and change are possible, even if at times the process is uncomfortable.
5. It takes time, do not rush it, help is available, you are not alone.
6. We believe that as a result of this process, the Lord Jesus will bring about confident leaders, engaged parishioners and new disciples.
7. Submitting the plan will help others through shared wisdom.
8. These plans are 'live' and should be reviewed on an ongoing basis as circumstances change.

Scope

The Parish Plans are developed by and for your parish and are intended to lead people into intimacy with Jesus Christ. You will be supported by the Agency through the *Some Definite Service* network, as you seek God's will for your parish in the three areas of Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation.

The Process in Outline

Whoever is involved in your parish process, we recommend offering a simple explanation of *Some Definite Service*, the diocesan-wide approach, to give context to the planning process. Included on p.12 is a single-page summary of SDS. More information, including a video and PowerPoint presentation, can be found on the Agency website: <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/our-parish-plan>

Prayer is essential for a fruitful process. We recommend that each planning discussion starts with scriptural reflection and prayer. We suggest reflecting with John 1:35-39 at the beginning of your planning discussions, a passage which provided our pattern for the following process.

In the passage, we see John the Baptist declaring Jesus as the promised messiah. In response, two disciples of John start to follow Jesus. A short dialogue follows whereby Jesus asks the two what they are seeking (**VISION**). Their reply is a question, 'where are you staying?' (**REALITY**). Jesus said, come and see, not simply providing information but inviting immediate and life-changing action (**PLAN**).

Therefore, we suggest 3-stages for each area of focus: Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation

- 1** Developing a **VISION** for the parish – what is the Lord's will for our parish today and what are our hopes as we look to the future? How do we want to be known?
- 2** Understanding the **REALITY** – what is our context? What do we do well already? What is our current situation and what resources are available to the parish?
- 3** Creating a **PLAN** - what can we concretely undertake in the three areas of Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation?

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and you will see.' So, they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

John 1:35–39

Who plans?

Leadership of this process should be given by the Parish Priest, however, experience has told us that creative solutions in response to the needs of Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation, can come from many sources. As such, it is recommended that a group, led by the Parish Priest, is convened to develop a VISION, to explore and understand the parish REALITY and to create the PLAN.

This group can be a senior leadership team, the parish pastoral council, or others, as determined by the priest, however, it makes sense to involve those who already operate in the areas of Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation.

Above all, where appointed, we ask that the Parish Leads take a key role in the discussion and understand that they will be instrumental in ensuring that the plan is carried out.

If you have yet to appoint your parish leads, this would be an excellent next step. More on parish leads can be found on our website: <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/sds-files>

Session Elements

1. Gather your group; size of the group is of less importance than interest and an ability to maturely and effectively contribute.
2. Start with prayer; we recommend a period of *Lectio Divina* (using John 1:35–39 or a passage pertaining to the areas of focus under consideration).
3. Follow the pattern laid out in section 4 for each area of focus.
4. Commit to paper what is requested at the end of the session (and submit via the online form).

On the next three pages you will find this 3-stage process for each of the areas of focus (Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation). There are questions for each, as well as suggested scripture passages for your reflection.

Experience has also shown that the most benefit is derived from considering Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation at separate meetings (though the areas are clearly connected).

Likewise, you might also care to separate out the three sessions VISION, REALITY and PLAN.

Your own process

Naturally, you may wish to use a pattern or method of your own devising. If this is the case, all we ask is that you cover the three areas of Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation, and store your plan with the Agency via the online form: <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/our-parish-plan>

Additional Resources

Various other resources (including additional questions, examples, visual aids and other materials) can be downloaded from the Agency website: <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/our-parish-plan>

How do we define evangelisation?

EVANGELISATION means to fulfil the mandate of Jesus Christ to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19), so that all might respond to the Father's love and be saved through communion with Jesus and his body, the Church. At the core of evangelisation is 'the proclamation of Christ and his Gospel by word and the testimony of life,' which invites conversion, evidenced through faith in Christ, repentance, and full communion with the Catholic Church. Here, we are primarily focused on those activities focused on 'outreach' to the lapsed, the 'lost' (cf. Luke 15:4-7) and those who wish to rediscover their faith.

Lectio Divina and Prayer

Lectio Divina is a practice of a slow and prayerful reading of scripture. It comprises four steps: reading, contemplation, prayer and meditation. We invite you to read a passage of scripture (either Matthew 28:19-20 or Romans 12:1-5 or Jeremiah 29:11-14 or John 1:35-39, a downloadable sheet featuring each passage can be found on our website) and then share your responses to the questions.

- What struck you about this passage? Perhaps just one word.
- What did you notice that you hadn't before?
- Jesus asks his followers direct questions. What questions should you be asking?

1. Developing a Vision

Thinking of our Parish VISION enables us to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord. It helps us look up out of the everyday-ness of parish life, the joys and the challenges and helps lift our eyes to the Lord – to remind ourselves of where we are headed. It enables us to recognise what God is calling our specific parish in the specific area of Evangelisation to be and to do.

Take some time to reflect on and discuss these three questions (there are more area specific questions available on our website <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/our-parish-plan> which might serve to stimulate discussion).

- What is the Lord's desire for this parish?
- What do we want this parish to be?
- Starting to ponder, what plans can we make to enable this, with God's grace, to happen?

2. Understanding the Reality

Thinking of our parish REALITY enables us to begin to see both who and what we are missing. Given our reality, where do we want to expend our energy on Evangelisation? Given our parish reality, what is our true evangelical need? Are there particular groups in our community that need a specific approach?

There is a wealth of information that would be useful to examine to aid our planning process. Not all of this is collected as a matter of course in our parishes and may take a bit of digging

to locate. There will also be a lot of anecdotal wisdom available to you about what has worked in the past and why. In developing your plans, do try to make data collection an integrated element, to help you with your future planning.

Take some time to reflect on and discuss these questions:

1. Are there areas of growth or strength in Evangelisation? Are there any events, programmes or resources that are currently being used or have recently been used to help people to encounter the Lord Jesus?
2. What or who do you think is missing from the parish?
3. What would potential solutions look like? Practically, materially and spiritually?

Note: There is are additional sources of information from the electoral roll and local government that could help the parish identify the needs of the wider community beyond the parish.

3. Creating a Plan

Now that we have completed our VISION and REALITY stage, we move to the PLAN stage. All three stages build on each other. In this stage we wish to explore how our vision might become a tangible and practical reality in our parish. In order to do this, we need to be clear about what we desire, who we desire it for, what the purpose and goal of the activity is, how it would practically be brought about our own context and how we would measure and assess it.

Take some time to reflect on and discuss these questions:

1. Which area does the parish want to give priority at this time? Is there anything that can be attempted with the cooperation of other churches in the deanery?
2. How would we seek to prepare the people to deliver any programmes or initiatives to ensure confidence and expectancy? What gaps can you identify concerning people, time, training and cost? How might this be addressed as part of your plan?
3. Knowing the locality, how might you reach beyond the typical attendees? Are there particular groups in your community that can be easily reached?
4. Do you want to look at seasonal activities (tying in to the liturgical year) or will you look to undertake consistent activity through the year?
5. What will the parish look like as a result of your new or developed activity?

Uploading the Plan

On the Agency website you will find a link to the online form for your to upload the plan. Along with space to enter your anticipated activities and their desired outcomes, we also ask for a small amount of context to allow us to recommend initiatives and resources to parishes of similar sizes and with similar demographics.

Form can be found here: <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/our-parish-plan>

Review what has been undertaken

Determine your review cycle. Do you want to review your new initiative (or improvement of existing activity) in 3, 6 or 12 months, for example? What indicators will demonstrate the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the initiative?

How do we define catechesis?

CATECHESIS (to 'echo' faith) teaches a knowledge of the faith, including Sacred Scripture and the Church's living tradition. Catechesis helps the believer understand the Church's liturgy, all of which lead one to Christ present in the Eucharist. Catechesis shows what it means to be holy in daily life, particularly in the 'domestic church' where 'children receive the first proclamation of faith' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1666). Here, we are mainly looking at the education in the Faith of children and young people towards the fullness of the Christian life.

Lectio Divina and Prayer

Lectio Divina is a practice of a slow and prayerful reading of scripture. It comprises four steps: reading, contemplation, prayer and meditation. We invite you to read a passage of scripture (either Luke 5:4-11 or 2 Timothy 3:14-17 or Ephesians 3:8-12 or John 1:35-39, a downloadable sheet featuring each passage can be found on our website) and then share your responses to the questions.

- What struck you about this passage? Perhaps just one word.
- What did you notice that you hadn't before?
- Jesus asks his followers direct questions. What questions should you be asking?

1. Developing a Vision

Thinking of our Parish VISION enables us to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord. It helps us look up out of the everyday-ness of parish life, the joys and the challenges and helps lift our eyes to the Lord – to remind ourselves of where we are headed. It enables us to recognise what God is calling our specific parish in the specific area of Catechesis to be and to do.

Take some time to reflect on and discuss these three questions (there are more area specific questions available on our website <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/our-parish-plan> which might serve to stimulate discussion).

- What is the Lord's desire for this parish?
- What do we want this parish to be?
- Starting to ponder, what plans can we make to enable this, with God's grace, to happen?

2. Understanding the Reality

Thinking of our Parish REALITY enables us to begin to see both what and who we are missing. Given our reality, where do we want to expend our energy on Catechesis? Given our parish reality, what is our true catechetical need? Are there particular groups in our community that need a specific approach?

There is a wealth of information that would be useful to examine to aid our planning process. Not all of this is collected as a matter of course in our parishes and may take a bit of digging to locate. There will also be a lot of anecdotal wisdom available to you about what has worked

in the past and why. In developing your plans, do try to make data collection an integrated element, to help you with your future planning.

Take some time to reflect on and discuss these questions:

1. Are there areas of growth or strength in Catechesis? Are there any events, programmes or resources that truly help people to encounter the Lord Jesus?
2. How are those in contact with the parish through Catechesis encouraged in their faith?
3. Does the current pattern encourage retention of people in faith practice? If not, how can we make moves to address this?
4. What would potential solutions look like? Practically, materially and spiritually?

Note: There is are additional sources of information from the electoral roll and local government that could help the parish identify the needs of the wider community beyond the parish.

3. Creating a Plan

Now that we have completed our VISION and REALITY stage, we move to the PLAN stage. All three stages build on each other. In this stage we wish to explore how our vision might become a tangible and practical reality in our parish. In order to do this, we need to be clear about what we desire, who we desire it for, what the purpose and goal of the activity is, how it would practically be brought about our own context and how we would measure and assess it.

Take some time to reflect on and discuss these questions:

1. Which area does the parish want to give priority at this time? Are you looking to develop your existing sacramental preparation or are you looking to start something fresh?
2. How would we assess the strengths and weaknesses of a renewed approach to helping parents and families enter more deeply into a relationship with Christ and his Church?
3. Based on the current reality of your sacramental programmes / ministries, and where you would like them to go, what gaps can you identify concerning people, time / training and cost? How might this be addressed as part of your plan?
4. What will the parish look like as a result of your new or developed activity?

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How do we define formation?

FORMATION is an answer to the call to growth and a continual process in the maturation of faith, of always bearing much fruit. Every single Christian is charged with a gradual and lifelong process in which we are ever-growing in spiritual and dogmatic formation. God grants us the dignity of appointing us to be labourers in his vineyard. Formation not only equips us to answer this call, but empowers us to thrive in it. By virtue of our baptism, every Christian is compelled to embrace spiritual development and familiarity with the teachings of the Church. Here, we focus on activities that help the lifelong process for adults in intellectual, moral and spiritual growth.

Lectio Divina and Prayer

Lectio Divina is a practice of a slow and prayerful reading of scripture. It comprises four steps: reading, contemplation, prayer and meditation. We invite you to read a passage of scripture (either 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:1 or John 21:15-17 or Isaiah 55:6-11 or John 1:35-39, a downloadable sheet featuring each passage can be found on our website) and then share your responses to the questions.

- What struck you about this passage? Perhaps just one word.
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1. Developing a Vision

Thinking of our Parish VISION enables us to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord. It helps us look up out of the everyday-ness of parish life, the joys and the challenges and helps lift our eyes to the Lord – to remind ourselves of where we are headed. It enables us to recognise what God is calling our specific parish in the specific area of Formation to be and to do.

Take some time to reflect on and discuss these three questions (there are more area specific questions available on our website <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/our-parish-plan> which might serve to stimulate discussion).

- What is the Lord's desire for this parish?
- What do we want this parish to be?
- Starting to ponder, what plans can we make to enable this, with God's grace, to happen?
- What would it be like if we had the personal and ongoing conversion of everyone in our parish at the heart of our formation / parish activities?

2. Understanding the Reality

Thinking of our Parish REALITY enables us to begin to see both what and who we are missing. Given our reality, where do we want to expend our energy on Formation? Given our parish reality, what is our true formation need (human, pastoral, liturgical, intellectual, spiritual etc.)? Are there particular groups in our community that need a specific approach?

There is a wealth of information that would be useful to examine to aid our planning process. Not all of this is collected as a matter of course in our parishes and may take a bit of digging to locate. There will also be a lot of anecdotal wisdom available to you about what has worked in the past and why. In developing your plans, do try to make data collection an integrated element, to help you with your future planning.

Take some time to reflect on and discuss these questions:

1. Are there areas of growth in formation? Are there any events, programmes and resources that are currently used or have recently been used to help people to deepen their faith?
2. What do you think is missing?
3. If you consider areas of faith formation (e.g. knowledge of the Bible, Church history, teaching and morality), which areas do you think that people would most benefit from in deepening their understanding and confidence of faith in?

Note: There is are additional sources of information from the electoral roll and local government that could help the parish identify the needs of the wider community beyond the parish.

3. Creating a Plan

Now that we have completed our VISION and REALITY stage, we move to the PLAN stage. All three stages build on each other. In this stage we wish to explore how our vision might become a tangible and practical reality in our parish. In order to do this, we need to be clear about what we desire, who we desire it for, what the purpose and goal of the activity is, how it would practically be brought about our own context and how we would measure and assess it.

Take some time to reflect on and discuss these questions:

1. Which area does the parish want to give priority at this time?
2. How is formation understood by our parish? How can this be clarified so there is more unity across the board?
3. What conversations need to take place (and with who) to help to progress the development of formation in your parish?
4. Based on the current reality of your formation programmes / ministries, and where you would like them to go, what gaps can you identify concerning people, time / training and cost?
5. What will the parish look like as a result of your new or developed activity?

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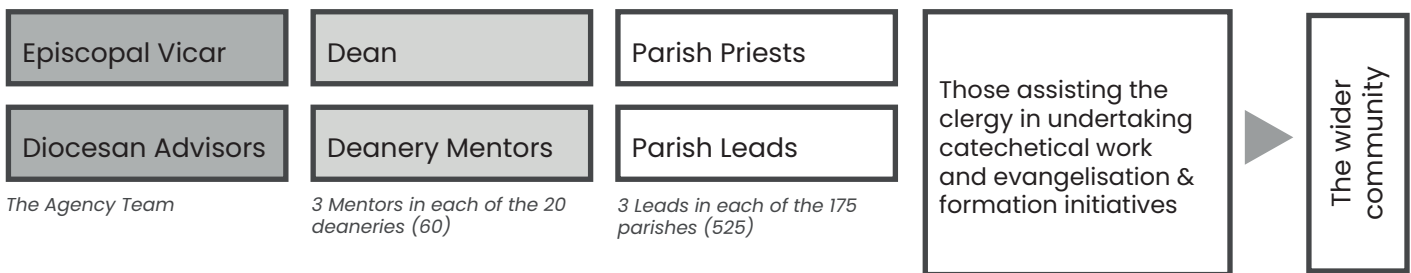
Some Definite Service

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Some Definite Service is the diocesan-wide approach for parish growth in Evangelisation, Catechesis, and Formation supported through local people, plans, and prayer.

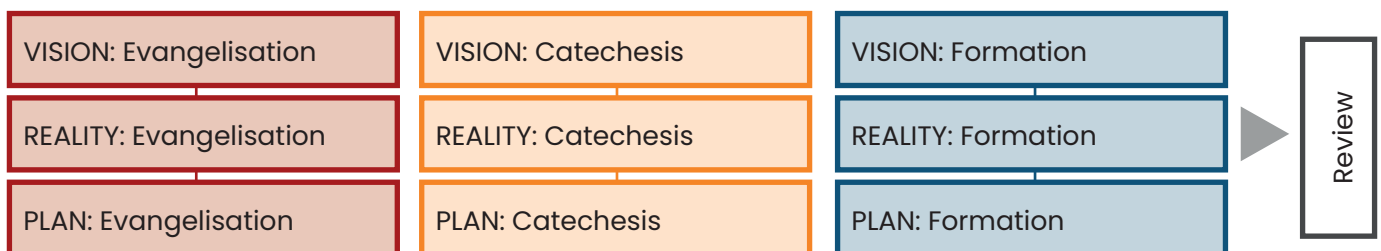
Local People: the Volunteer Missionary Network

The ultimate goal of *Some Definite Service* is that the thousands of people, in our parishes and beyond, are provided with the opportunity to get to know Jesus and deepen that relationship. Our method relies on a focus on 'our people's people' – advisors helping mentors, mentors their leads all supporting the vision of our priests.



Parish Plans: Developing the Mission

Parish Plans are those of the parish, seeking God's will and supported by the Agency. They pertain to the three areas of Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation and follow a repeated pattern of VISION, REALITY, PLAN (an explanation of *Some Definite Service* is recommended). The Plans will be reviewed in the parish on a regular basis.



Prayer: Seeking God's Will and Wisdom

None of this is possible without prayer. We need to be renewed ourselves. The Spirit of God is alive in each of us and it is the Spirit of God who will lead us forward. Let us trust that he will continue to reveal to us our particular missions so that we can become a truly missionary archdiocese.

Three Areas: Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation