



Diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory

Diocesan Review Commission Report (2023)

Offering a Way Forward



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Foreword

In June of 2019, the Diocesan Synod of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, set up the Diocesan Review Commission (the Commission), to consult widely with all those involved in the life of the Church within the Diocese, to plan and shape the future. The Commission was tasked with undertaking “a strategic review of our diocesan and parochial life, to explore our strengths and weaknesses, with special regard to imaginative spiritual outreach, our financial needs and the deployment of ministry, so that we may plan appropriately for the future”.

The Commission’s approach from the outset was to undertake an all-encompassing consultation process; ensuring that all stakeholders, at parish and diocesan levels, had an opportunity to contribute and to be heard. Like all within our Diocese, the Commission had to adapt to the Covid - 19 pandemic which significantly impacted our work. It is essential that we acknowledge the difficult times experienced by all during Covid, and our thoughts are particularly with those who lost loved ones.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all the clergy and laity from around the Diocese who took time to support and engage deeply with us over the past 46 months. We must celebrate and thank everyone who in distinct ways already play their part in the ministry of God’s Kingdom, by serving in many roles within the daily life of our parishes.

It is undeniable that the life of our parishes, centred around the core work of our Bishop, Archdeacons, rectors/priests in charge, and Diocesan office team are nourished and sustained by so many, including retired clergy; non-stipendiary ministers; ordained local ministers; chaplains; diocesan readers; parish readers; liturgical assistants; church organists, choristers, campanologists; Sunday school leaders; vergers/sextons; leaders and participants in church organisations (BB/GFS/MU); those involved in the charitable and community outreach of the Church; those who volunteer on Church vestries and committees; and those who work to upkeep our Church buildings and property. That so many give so freely and generously of their time is a matter for celebration and deep appreciation.

We must also acknowledge and thank our external experts who supported our work, sharing their gifts and abundant talents with us. Ms Cathy Winston (market researcher and business strategist) worked with us, in a voluntary capacity, in the early stages, advising on our review approach and strategy. Mr. Eric Rainsberry regularly and freely shared his expertise and knowledge with us, designing our bespoke consultation process, providing meeting facilitation training and, most recently, designing our report front cover. Dr. Katrina Collins has been instrumental in the analysis and interpretation of the information that we captured and brings academic validation to our process and outcomes. We are truly thankful and very appreciative of all their support.

We also acknowledge the changes within the Diocese which have taken place since the Commission was established, including the translation of Bishop Burrows and the arrival of Bishop Wilkinson. We are grateful to Bishop Wilkinson for his interaction with the Commission and wish him every blessing as he begins to share his vision and ministry among the people of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory. We would also like to thank the Archdeacons and the Diocesan Office team who contributed greatly and supported us throughout our journey.

As we hand our report, with hope and excitement, into the safe hands of Bishop Wilkinson and Synod, we bring the insights that we have gained from listening to all those who engaged with us, and which have grounded our proposal of recommendations. Part of our proposal to Synod is the establishment of a Bishop's Advisory Group who, in collaboration with Bishop Wilkinson will review, consider, and implement the recommendations as practicable and will report periodically to Diocesan Council and Diocesan Synod regarding progress.

The birth of the Commission was occasioned by the significant challenges which face the Church in these Diocese. These challenges are common to the Church across divides of denomination and geography. Our Church exists in a world which is increasingly secular, with decreasing financial reserves; dwindling vocations and significant demands on its resources. The future can appear challenging. Yet, as Christians, we can look ahead with confidence and trust, knowing that *"in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* (Rom. 8:28).

I commend this report for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,
Dorcas Collier-Hannon
Chairperson of the Commission

1.0 Introduction

This report sets out the detailed findings from the Diocesan Review Commission (the Commission) following a comprehensive and robust review of the Diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory. The report sets out **the Terms of Reference established by the Diocesan Synod in June 2019 which served as a roadmap for the work of the Commission**. Each of the different aspects of the review are outlined and the contributions of all participants who engaged in the process have been carefully considered. This formed the foundations from which recommendations have been put forward by the Commission.

2.0 Terms of Reference

2.1 The Diocesan Review Commission was established by a motion passed by Diocesan Synod at a special meeting in June 2019.

The Synod declared that: *‘the time is right for a strategic review of our Diocesan and parochial life, to explore our strengths and weaknesses, with special regard to imaginative spiritual outreach, our financial needs and the deployment of ministry, so that we may plan appropriately for the future with hope and confidence and resolves to establish a Commission with the following remit:*

- *To consult with all parochial unions and groups across the Dioceses, in order to identify current and prospective needs and patterns of ministry for the future.*
- *To focus in particular on the situations where existing models of ministry are unsustainable and to explore alternatives.*
- *To be open to the promptings of the Spirit in identifying ways in which the mission and witness of the Church can be strengthened in our united Dioceses to meet the challenges of the future.*
- *To seek imaginative ways of promoting the Gospel message and empowering the laity to share more fully in the ministry of the whole people of God.*
- *To take into account developments including the IDLE/Fresh Expressions process by incorporating and developing its potential as a vision for our Diocese.*

(These Terms of Reference were subsequently amended following a meeting between the Commission and Diocesan Council in December 2021 so as to delete reference to IDLE/Fresh Expressions.)

2.1.1 Diocesan Review Process

Members of the Commission were elected by the Diocesan Synod to serve as the group with responsibility to carry out the task as described in the remit above, and to bring the completed report back to the Diocesan Synod. The Chairperson of the group was selected by the Bishop.

The Commission comprised of:

- **Lay:** Eric Driver
Phyllis Grothier
Gillian Purser
Linda Rainsberry
- **Clergy:** The Reverend Ian Cruickshank
The Very Reverend Tom Gordon*
*Resigned and replaced by The Reverend Canon Robert Jones, Synod 2021
- **Chairperson:** Dorcas Collier-Hannon

Recommendations, based on the data gathered by the Commission, will be proposed.

2.2 External Consultants were engaged to support the work of the Commission.

Dr Collins conducted an analysis of secondary data captured through surveys, focus groups, and one-to-one interviews completed in the period 2019-2022 as part of the Diocesan Review.

Data gathering, sorting and coding has been carried out using a standardised template applied across all methods of consultation. Dr Collins did the following as part of the external analysis:

- Conducted a validity check on sorting and coding.
- Built an overarching framework to order and present the different consultation methods.
- Carried out a framework analysis of the themes identified to create a ranking of primary and secondary themes.
- Aggregated and disaggregated the data to pinpoint key themes within and across each stakeholder group.

Mr. Eric Rainsberry

Provided meeting facilitation training for the Commission team and designed an evidence based, bespoke active learning consultation process for the Clergy and parish face to face meetings. He also provided graphic design services for the front page of the final report document.

Ms Cathy Winston

Supported the work of the Commission at an early stage and introduced the concept for 'Café Conversations' and the approach to the task that was undertaken by the Commission.

The Diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory (CFO) is one of eleven Dioceses of the Church of Ireland. Geographically, we cover a large area of the Southeast from Rosslare to Mountrath and from Gorey to Cahir.

<https://cashel.anglican.org/>

CHURCH OF IRELAND UNITED DIOCESES OF CASHEL, FERNS & OSSORY

LEGEND

- DIOCESE OF FERNS
- DIOCESE OF CASHEL
- DIOCESE OF LEIGLIN
- DIOCESE OF OSSORY
- DIOCESE OF LISMORE
- DIOCESE OF WATERFORD
- DIOCESE BOUNDARY
- PARISH/CLERE BOUNDARY
- PARISH BOUNDARY
- KILLS
- KILLS
- CATHEDRAL

the word 'Diocese' refers to the United Dioceses of Cashel, Ferns & Ossory
the word 'parish' refers to a parish/group/union of parishes.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Parish Meetings

Following the sorting and review of responses gathered from individual parishes, the cross-tabulation of data identified **a high degree of commonality in emerging themes**. For this reason, the information presented in the section below refers to the combined responses from individual parishes.

The **framework** sets out the following key areas highlighted for consideration by the Commission.

- **Services**
- **Parish/Community**
- **Clergy**
- **Youth**
- **Buildings**
- **Faith**
- **Finances**
- **Communication**
- **Administration**
- **Volunteers**
- **Church**

The **themes** appear across the four quadrants (**positives, challenges, hopes, fears**) are interlinked to form the architecture of Diocesan living.

The extended detail inside each theme provides layers in **parishioners' experiences and perceptions of the position of their parish, Diocese and Church**.

The substantive focus of reflections offered by participants was on **securing the future sustainability** of the Church in parish and Diocesan life.

This led to suggestions about the **change that was required and how best to achieve this**.

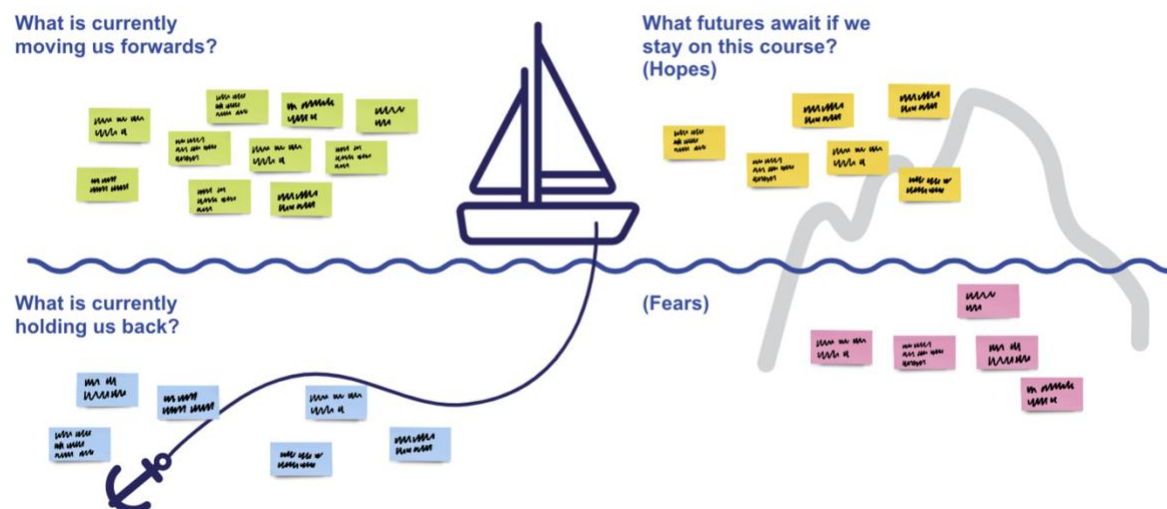
Collectively the themes speak to the role of individuals (parishioners, clergy and leadership) in working together to **adapt to the dynamic changes** of modern life while upholding faith and commitment to Christian values.

The more **secular landscape of society** was viewed as a competitor to faith and attendance at Church activities including Sunday worship. The corresponding impact on congregational rates and expression of interest in Church roles, created a ripple effect on the fiscal viability of buildings and parish affordability.

Table 1: Framework Method

For face-to-face meetings with clergy and parishioners, the consultation method involved participants noting their ideas on 'Post-it's' which they were invited to affix to a poster depicting a sailboat/anchor and island/iceberg. In this way they explored what they felt were the positives, challenges, hopes and fears within the Diocese. Wind in sails represented (what is working well), anchor (what is holding us back), island (hopes) and iceberg (fears).

The Sailboat Exercise



CODE	DESCRIPTION
Positives (What is moving the boat forward)	
Services	Joyful hymns and sermons; Bible study; Freedom to worship; Hospitality at services; High quality sermons.
Parish/Community	Fellowship; Worship; Good congregation; Parish spirit (sense of belonging); Parish identity (inclusive and caring); Commitment of others; Common belief; Community relations with other faiths; Supporting those in need; Loyal parishioners; High visibility in the community; Sense of belonging; Partnership with the school.
Clergy	Enthusiastic clergy; A leader who listens; Friendship among clergy-no cliques; Motivated.
Youth	Jesus and Me (JAM) club; Boys Brigade and Girls Friendly Society; Generous youth budget.
Buildings (Fabric)	Beautiful buildings; Holds history of the parish; Scenic location of Churches; Doors kept open to the public.
Faith	Core to everything; Hope.
Challenges (What is holding the boat back)	
Services	Not family centred; Needs to be modernised; Too long; Too old fashioned; More music.

Parish/Community	Aging population; Lack of engagement; Negativity; Disaffected Criticism; Bullying; Disharmony between clergy and parishioners; Lack of a desire to change; Dwindling numbers; Apathy and lack of enthusiasm; Secularisation of society; Competing activities (sport).
Communication	Church not listening to its people; Poor communication from some Rectors; Mixed messages; Confusion.
Clergy	Concern for their welfare; Not enough time for pastoral matters; Unrealistic expectations; Need for support for their mental health; Lack of clergy visits; Lack of flexibility; Speaking to the converted won't create change; Not in community enough; some clergy out of touch with parishioners re: pastoral needs.
Financial	Always looking for money; Financial burden; Always to the fore; Assessment too high when too few supporting the parish and too many buildings; Too much emphasis on fundraising.
Administration	Too much bureaucracy; Clergy and laity overworked with paperwork; Lack of efficiency with tasks.
Youth	Disinterested; Not engaged; No Sunday school or youth group; No activities for teenagers; Not reaching youth; No appeal.
Buildings (Fabric)	Gives the parish and Diocese headaches; Materialism.
Volunteers	Insufficient volunteers for official roles; Unfounded perception that volunteers are clamouring to be involved.
Church	Conservative thinking; Old fashioned; Not keeping pace with today's lifestyle; Hierarchical; Too slow to act; Inflexible; Lack of leadership; More joined up thinking needed; Archaic views on the Church.
Hopes (for what lies ahead in five/ten/twenty years)	
Services	School children involved; Energised worship; Vibrant; Ecumenical services; Lively worship; Modernised.
Parish/Community	Community enrolment without parish boundaries; Vibrant community spirit; Greater attendance; Listening to younger generation; Thriving; Positive place for our children to have faith & sense of community; Flourishing community; Inclusive; More community involvement; Outreach; Events; Rationalisation of parishes and Churches; Need for emphasis on mission; Family based; Community worship centre with arts, music, support.
Communication	Open and consistent communication.
Clergy	Change in the type of clergy person; Tenure addressed; Visible; Relevant; Visiting people in homes; Young and energetic clergy; No shortages of clergy
Financial	Finance security Understanding financial requirements to keep Churches open and in good repair
Youth	Youth outings; Encourage youth; Encourage young families.

Buildings (Fabric)	Amalgamate Churches; Still open and home to flourishing congregations; Used for talks and other events; Less effort on buildings and more on community and ministry; Not burdened with too many Churches to look after; Takes courage to close buildings.
Faith	A praying community; A Christian revival; Beacon of spiritual light; Keep faith; Attending by choice not obligation.
Church	Open and inclusive; Alive and witnessing; More welcoming; Moves with the times; Identity that stands up for social justice; Question its survival; Charismatic; Relevant; Tolerant; Central hub; Visionary leaders.
Fears (of what lies ahead in five/ten/twenty years)	
Parish/Community	No Union fellowship; Lack of spiritual values; Loss of faith; Loss of community; Word of God missing; No future generation; End of religion; Loss of heritage and history; No sense of place; No hope.
Communication	Lack of adoption of technology.
Clergy	No clergy; Lack of clarity about the role of the Rector; Not able to pay clergy; Same clergymen and no change.
Financial	Bankrupt; A Church for the wealthy; Escalating costs with lack of income; Wealth will be the new god.
Youth	Leaving youth behind; Loss of interest in Church; No young people to continue the Church.
Buildings (Fabric)	Churches closing; Dormant; Only available in larger urban settings; Derelict; Buildings become more important than people.
Church	Apathy; Irrelevant; Will lose its way; Watering down of old rituals; Losing identity.

4.1.2 Brainstorming Ideas to Identified Fears/Concerns

Following discussion of pertinent issues affecting the Church at parish and Diocesan level, participants put forward what they believe should be the focus for finding solutions. These were organised under four headings;

- **Improve the positive;**
- **Solve the challenges;**
- **Realise hope;**
- **Allay fears.**

Responses were ranked by frequency to create headline themes under which corresponding details were aligned. The same themes emerged which reinforced the findings from the thematic analysis conducted previously. The four categories were interconnected with issues often appearing to be co-existent (Table 2).

Table 2: Ideas for consideration

Improve the positive	
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance• Preaching• Spiritual nourishment• Music
Parish/Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community spirit• Disaffected• Parishes good at working together• The people• Welcome and hospitality
Clergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visits• Welfare• Good rector
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on dealing with financial insecurity and debt
Admin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workload
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School children• Build on youth interactions• Encourage youth
Buildings (Fabric)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unhealthy attitude to buildings
Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Core to everything
Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical need for leadership
Solve the challenges	
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor attendance

Parish/Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging population • Expectations • Disaffected
Clergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative clergy
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of debt
Admin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of involvement • Not relevant to them
Buildings (Fabric)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unhealthy attitude to buildings
Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership
Realise Hope	
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow parochialism • Modernise worship • Preaching the gospel
Parish/Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative mindset • Christianity to grow
Clergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young and energetic • More visits
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church for all ages • Healthy Church-school link
Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change mindset • Open and inclusive • Positive change of religious culture • Open to all believers
Allay fears	
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreasing congregation
Parish/Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishioners will be dictated to • Lack of people • People disconnected from Church • Loss of parish community • Not knowing our neighbours
Clergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clergy
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustentation and upkeep
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost and forgot Church
Buildings (Fabric)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will close • Upkeep
Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No interest in Christian faith • No spiritual guidance
Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity • Out of touch

4.1.3 Popular Solution Ideas

Suggestions were put forward for solutions that could result in 'quick wins' which require less effort but could reap high rewards. Simultaneously, worthwhile ideas that are likely to need a greater investment of effort to yield a high impact result were also proposed. These were plotted on an 'Action Board'.

Analysis of the language and narrative surrounding the proposed ideas **identified the recurrent call for change**. This came in the form of asking for 'more of something' or the introduction of innovations. Put together these mapped out a future vision and landscape for the Diocese, its parishes and parishioners (Figure 2 and 3).

When asked which ideas could be 'Ignored for now' the following were put forward:

- Alternative church service times and styles.
- Forum for managing expectations.
- Guidance from Central Church about what is expected of Clergy.
- Welcoming members of other Anglican traditions
- Youth service on a Saturday evening.
- Relocate Rectors after fixed tenure.



Figure 2: Parish Solution Ideas Matrix (Quick Wins)

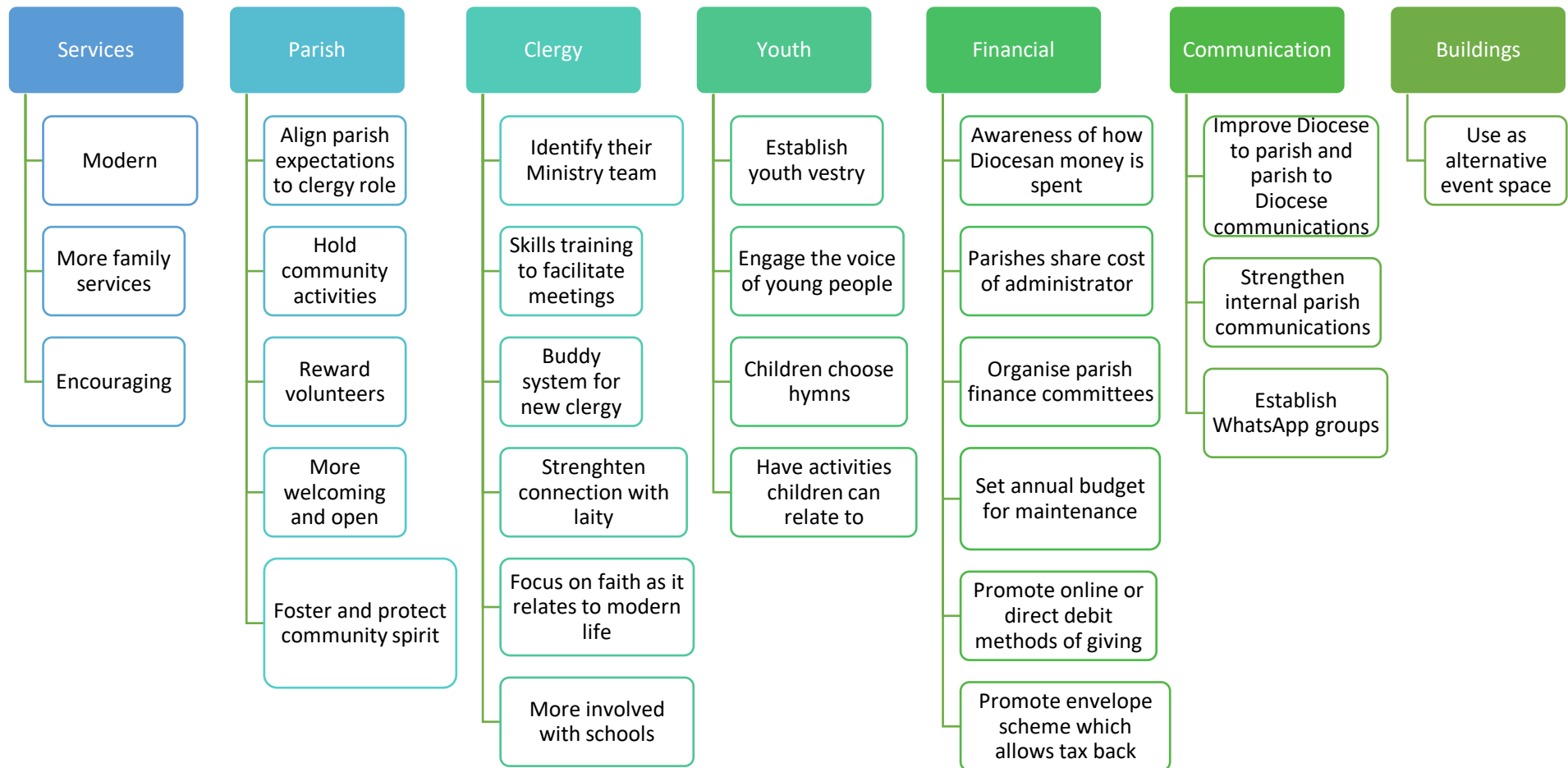
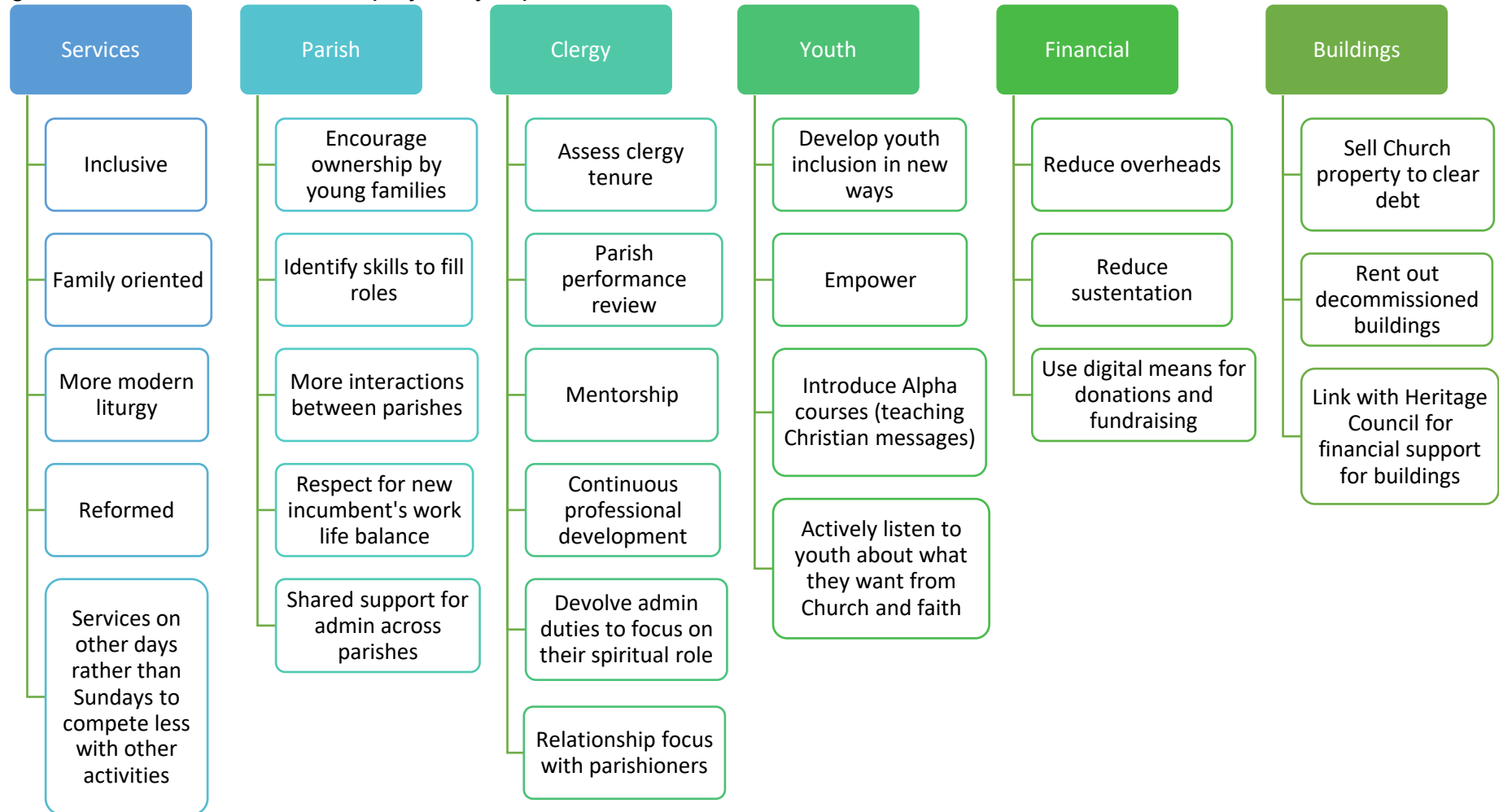


Figure 3: Parish Solution Ideas Matrix (Major Projects)



4.2 Church of Ireland Schools

Diocesan schools fulfil a vital role in the life of the Church through nurturing faith and educating children toward Christian citizenship.

The Bishop has oversight of the Church of Ireland national and secondary schools in the Diocese and holds the office of Patron.

It was suggested, through comments made to the Commission, that parents choose to send their children to Church of Ireland schools because of historical reasons, family traditions, denominational choice and perceived tolerance. The religious education curriculum taught in Church of Ireland primary schools is called 'Follow Me'. This has been developed in collaboration with the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches.

An authentic close liaison between the school and Church communities was recommended as being key to integrating families and youth in parish life. In this regard it is suggested that where possible the school should be in and out of the Church and clergy should be a familiar figure in the school.

The Diocese has twenty-six national Schools and one secondary school. All schools were invited to contribute to the Review. Analysis of Primary school responses to three questions found a number of overlaps in the activities that form a core part of the spiritual education of pupils. Schools identified what takes place to support the development of faith in educational environments of pupils and teachers, the links they have created with local parishes and the Diocese. Suggestions were put forward about what the Diocese could do going forward to continue to develop faith in Church of Ireland schools.

4.2.1 What schools do around faith.

Schools reported similar activities related to how pupils are supported in their educational journey through the nurturing of faith and the impartment of Christian values.

The list below provides a summary of the faith-based opportunities offered to primary age pupils. In addition, the training and professional development of teachers was highlighted as a key factor in implementing the principles of the Christian ethos.

4.2.1.2 National Schools

Pupils

- Daily prayers.
- School prayer known by all the children.
- Set RE time within the school day (Church of Ireland programme and Bible Time for Juniors).
- Singing of hymns.
- Classroom resources for seasonal activities.
- Coin collection after weekly Assembly to support charities.
- Patron's programme '*Follow Me*' used throughout the year.

- Attend Choral festival.
- Participate annually in the Bishop's competitions (Art and medal competitions).
- Visits from clergy.
- Clergy led assembly.
- Visible symbols of the ethos of the Church in the school building (Cross and pictures).
- Staff attend additional training on the '*Follow Me*' programme at Dublin City University (DCU).
- Artwork created based on bible themes being taught.
- Prayers written by pupils.
- Christmas activities: Nativity play, carol service, Christmas concert.
- Promoting Christian values and ethos throughout the school day.
- Promoting inclusivity in our classrooms – respecting all faiths and none.
- Applying the principles of learning that underpin the teaching of RE including:
 - the child's sense of wonder and natural curiosity,
 - the child as an active agent in the learning process, the developmental nature of learning,
 - the child's knowledge and experience as a base for learning,
 - environment-based learning,
 - the aesthetic dimension and collaborative learning.

Teachers

- Teachers who did not train in CICE/CIC completing their Church of Ireland RE Certificate course.
- Teachers taking part in upskilling webinars provided by Jacqui Wilkinson on the '*Follow Me*' Programme.

4.2.1.3 Links with the local Parishes

The community within which the school sits resulted in connections and relationships with the local parishes being cultivated over time. A number of Church based activities were described as part of the ongoing engagement with the local parishes. There was two-way involvement between the schools and parishes. This meant that local parishioners were represented on and participated in school faith life. The various interactions are outlined below:

- Clergy represented on the Board of Management.
- Visit the cathedral in addition to local churches.
- Visit the church and attend services with other parishioners at Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day and Harvest Thanksgiving.
- Blessing ceremony at the first Assembly of the year.
- Encourage families to attend services that their children are taking part in.
- Encourage the children to involve themselves in relevant parochial and diocesan events.
- Visits from Christian charities such as Leprosy Mission and Fields of Life.
- Clergy as a guest speaker on Church and faith-related matters.
- Pupils and teachers have been invited by the Rector to read in Church.

- The two Patron's nominees on the Board of Management are active parishioners and act as excellent links to the faith community.
- The school's notes are included in the monthly parish notes and sent to the *Diocesan Magazine*, keeping the wider community informed on school news.
- Fundraising with members of the local community.
- Clergy person is also a pastoral presence in the school keeping in contact with staff in difficulty and checking in with people who need support.
- The Clergy person is invited to secular celebrations at the school, graduations, school fundraising events, school barbeque.
- Promote parish events on the School communication platform.
- Contribute to the parish newsletter, and the *Diocesan Magazine*.
- Provide use of our school/hall and resources for parish events.
- Diocesan Schools Environmental Award: Development of outdoor classroom, creating bug hotels. Planting trees/apple trees, wildflower beds/sunflowers.

4.2.1.4 Links with the Diocese

At a Diocesan level the schools were connected to the Diocese through the Patron and his presence at formal and informal school activities. It was clear from the responses to the Review that the previous Bishop maintained a regular presence at national schools across the Diocese. The Bishop's involvement was reflected at the pupil, teacher, advisory group and policy level in the schools. There was a palpable recognition of how the Bishop valued the role of young people in the Church and how his commitment to Church of Ireland schools bore witness to this. Diocesan links with national schools included:

- Active involvement of the Bishop in school events and activities through formal and informal engagements.
- Participation in the:
 - Choral Festival.
 - Diocesan Soccer Blitz.
 - Bishop's Art Competition.
- Bishop hosted teacher's event.
- Representation on the Diocesan Board of Education.
- Involvement with the Patron's Advisory Group.
- Engagement of the Patron in school policy preparation.
- Patron is responsible for the selection panel composition in school interviews.
- Family service for all age worship held monthly. The children are prepared in school and play a huge part in the service-reading the lessons and prayers, collecting the money, handing out the hymn books or leaflets, greeting and welcoming people and helping with the refreshments. It is an opportunity for the children to have a meaningful part to play and to be part of the community.

4.2.1.5 Diocese Developing Faith in Church of Ireland Schools

When asked to consider how the Diocese could contribute to the development of faith in Church of Ireland schools, the suggestions put forward would involve evoking curriculum updates, changing in teaching method, parental input, and wider recognition at Diocesan events of children's activities:

- Updating the RE curriculum.
- More emphasis on Bible Stores from Infants up to 6th class.
- Online interactive Bible-based webinars with other schools in the Diocese.
- Termly Newsletter for school that has child friendly Bible and faith related activities.
- Central bank of resources on a dedicated website that are child friendly.
- Webinars with guest speakers for teachers.
- Shared online platform for teachers to view, share and explore ideas around promoting faith in schools.
- Visits from members of the local parishes.
- Invite prize winners from the Bishop's art competition to a meeting of local or regional Synod to recognise the children's work and achievements.
- Encourage parents to see the value of attending Church activities with their children.
- Contribute as a Diocese to the necessary funding for an update to the 'Follow Me' programme.

4.2.2 Church of Ireland Secondary School

4.2.2.1 What the school does around faith.

The one secondary school in the Diocese following a Church of Ireland ethos and curriculum offered insights into how faith is promoted and supported in the school environment. The position of a full-time Chaplain was viewed as being central to the faith tradition in the school. A number of activities were carried out by the Chaplain directly which formed the main architecture of the school's spiritual framework. Through the different contributions of the Chaplain and interactions with pupils and staff, the secondary school described a full spectrum of opportunities to grow and strengthen pupil's faith in the Church of Ireland tradition.

- Full-time Chaplain who is central to:
 - Assembly.
 - Compline.
 - Meditation.
 - Confirmation preparation.
 - Religion classes (curricular and non-curricular).
 - Christmas carol service in the Cathedral.
 - Memorial services.
 - Meets all class groups at start of year.
 - Makes students aware that their door/office always open.
 - Formal and informal opportunities to connect with students and staff.
 - Involvement in choirs and orchestra.

- Input at staff meetings through prayer/reflection.
- Attends funerals and support bereaved families through written correspondence and visits.
- Participate in Bishop's Medal competition.
- Fundraising for charities.
- Share ideas with other teachers in non-curriculum RE.

4.2.2.2 Links with the Parish/Diocesan/Cathedral

There were Diocesan based services at the Cathedral which pupils attended such as key festivals and the pivotal milestone of Confirmation. In addition, the Chaplain visited other parishes for weekend services, while the school principal linked with the national schools in the Diocese who would serve as pathway schools to secondary education.

- Services and Christian milestones (Confirmation) at the Cathedral.
- School Chaplain visiting other parishes on weekends.
- School Principal visits Diocesan primary schools.

4.2.2.3 Diocese Developing Faith in Church of Ireland Schools

When asked about proposals for the future and continued involvement of the Diocese in Church of Ireland schools, **suggestions were linked to digital innovation to promote communications, invitations to other Church leaders to visit assemblies, and the expansion of competitions to a regional/national rather than single competitions focusing on a single creative art.**

Recommendations included:

- Investigate having a hub for communication in the Diocesan secondary school chapel.
- Create an online hub which could facilitate Sunday services delivered by invited Diocesan clergy.
- Pre-recorded monthly services from the Diocesan secondary school chapel with student involvement.
- Diocesan secondary school Chapel Podcast: Chaplain's Chats.
- Choir and orchestra travel to other Cathedrals or parishes in Diocese.
- Pilgrimages (Camino walk).
- Bishop's Medal Competition: Expand on this tradition to create Diocesan regional/national competitions or other initiatives in art, photography.
- Invite Church Leaders from other denominations/faiths to address Assemblies.
- Create pool of visiting clergy for Assemblies.
- Create choral scholarships.
- Hold Diocesan secondary school events in St Canice's Cathedral, e.g., Musical evening, Prize Day and Graduation to develop and create opportunities for further integration.
- Diocesan secondary school Chaplain visits to primary schools in Diocese.

4.3 Stakeholders

4.3.1 Specific Stakeholder Groups

Review of detailed notes from each meeting with the different stakeholder groups were carefully and methodically examined. The salient points considered to be most significant and recurring from the discussions were identified and have been listed under the respective stakeholder group.

4.3.1.1 Diocesan Mothers' Union representatives

- It is evident that members undertake a huge variety of tasks and provide an incalculable measure of support throughout parishes, that they operate a broad practical outreach to the community, both locally and internationally, that they engage in activism on important matters of social justice, and that they embody active and selfless Christian discipleship.
- Mothers' Union (MU) called for a close working relationship with clergy and for the MU to be more closely linked with the life of the Church to include:
 - To see clergy become more involved in MU (perhaps becoming members).
 - MU members to be asked occasionally to speak at family services.
 - MU services to be part of normal Sunday morning service (as they are for BB and GFS), instead of weeknights when only MU members are there.
 - MU to be prayed for regularly at Sunday services.
- The strong reputation and history of the MU in parishes was viewed as an exemplar of parish and Christian life which should be strengthened and protected into the future.
- There is a recognition of the role of MU as advocates and representatives of local, national and global citizenship through their work.

4.3.1.2 Diocesan/Parish Readers

- Acknowledge and welcome the training provided on preaching, communication skills, public speaking, and the management of pastoral issues disclosed to Readers.
- Welcome all opportunities for peer support, learning and fellowship with other Readers through social and educational events.
- Greater certainty needed on the rota to enable planning of other engagements and involvement in Church life.
- Financial support for the purchase of theological books and the provision of a central resource library suitable for Readers.
- Details on congregations and parishes ahead of services that would support the Readers to plan, adapt and tailor the sermons/hymns to suit parishioners.
- Deliberate consideration given to the additional forms of Ministry that Readers could be involved in.
- At times feeling taken for granted, and that lack of scheduling doesn't allow time off to receive communion as a church member rather than a reader.
- Improved communication needed between Readers and Clergy to support them in situations where they require more sensitive and personal identification with the congregation.

- Exploration of the role of technology and skills required to use digital platforms to engage the Church community.

4.3.1.3 Diocesan Finance Committee

- Lack of understanding of the work of the Finance Committee at parish level and the specific details of its function as it relates to parish finances.
- Specific Terms of Reference for the work of the Finance Committee would be welcomed.
- Significant concerns about the financial viability of parishes based on the immediate challenge of overdue assessments.
- The withholding of sustentation to the Diocese was viewed as a form of protest.
- Recognised that the financial operations of parishes and the Diocese is bound by the Constitution of the Church of Ireland and aligned to a historical model of fiscal management.
- COVID19 had a significant effect on the financial sustainability of the Diocese and Ministry.
- New models of Ministry are required to change the direction of parish demise.
- It was welcomed that parishes provided assistance in both identifying and solving problems with regards to their financial status.
- Fixed tenure of clergy and the upkeep of buildings create difficulties in providing an agile response to financial pressures.

4.3.1.4 Diocesan Communication team/committee

- The connectivity between Diocesan and parish communications is not fully embraced or utilised.
- Resources are limited which is a challenge when in modern communication terms there is a continuous pressure to engage audiences with quality content using multiple channels of engagement.
- Diocesan magazine is seen not only as a marketing tool but a pastoral tool.
- The development of a Diocesan communication team committee would be welcomed.
- Operational updates are required to bolster reliable communication between Church and parishioners to provide a two-way communication channel. Each parish at a minimum should have:
 - Group text established.
 - Weekly email to parishioners.
 - Parish Facebook page.

4.3.1.5 Diocesan Senior Management reflections

- Team Ministry is likely to be the preferred and most viable model of Ministry for the sustainability of parish and Diocesan life.
- Radical changes to Ministry would require substantial legislation to be approved by General Synod.
- The assessment system should be re-examined to investigate inequities across parishes in terms of fiscal contributions.

- An alternative model of re-configuration is to devise regional hubs based around the cathedrals.
- The Rural Deanery system is much more active in Northern Ireland than in this Diocese.
- Identify models of lay Ministry in other Dioceses that could be trialled in order to strengthen lay leadership in this Diocese.
- The nomination process and system need to be re-cast for both modern employment law and for genuine input from parochial nominators.

4.3.1.6 Girls' Friendly Society (GFS)

- Updated listing of diocesan GFS branches and members are maintained in the Dublin HQ
- Branch and member numbers within the Diocese is increasing.
- Faith based resource for Clergy and parish to use as an opportunity to link with primary school children and youth.
- In some cases, GFS branches cross several parish boundaries.
- Branch leaders operate in a voluntary capacity and to support their work and to harness the benefits for the branches and parishes, acknowledgement of their activities in parish literature, websites and in parish profiles is encouraged.
- Branch Leaders co-ordinate meetings and content and greatly appreciate and value clergy involvement at their meetings. They would welcome involvement from clergy who have not yet used the opportunity to engage with them and their members.
- This clergy involvement collaboratively opens the door to GFS leaders and members participating in parish worship.
- GFS branch leaders would welcome an opportunity:
 - to provide feedback to the Select Vestry on parish GFS activities if requested.
 - For information on the local GFS branch, activities, and events to be advertised in the local Diocesan parish schools.
 - for a resource person (accountable to Council) to be appointed as an advisory support for local parish youth leaders of which the GFS is an integral part.
 - For Garda vetting process to remain in parish as GFS is a parochial run activity.

4.3.1.7 The Boys' Brigade (BB)

- Recognition that the Boys' Brigade is a faith-based organisation and as such needs the support of all involved in the spiritual life of the parish.
- Being a worldwide organisation, it also provides an opportunity to connect with the wider church.
- There was a desire, without exception, for a closer link with the rectors of the parish,
- There was also mention of possible support from a Youth worker.
- Leaders work in a voluntary capacity and would welcome more recognition, linkage, communication, and support from parish and clergy.
- Felt that a disconnect may exist and that BB is not being seen as an integral part of the parish community.
- Where a parish has a Boys Brigade Company it is understood, by the organisation, that the Rector is Chaplain.

- Challenges are posed by difficulties in retaining interest among the boys, recruitment of leaders and by competition from other activities.
- Important to note that the Boys Brigade has a separate Safeguarding structure.
- Appreciation was expressed for parishes who show interest in the work of the Company. Would encourage other parishes who do not have linkage to reach out to develop linkages.
- Appreciation expressed for Clergy who attend regularly, even for a few minutes and who share in the spiritual life of the organisation. Clergy who have not yet taken the opportunity would be welcomed.
- It was noted in particular that boys who may not otherwise have contact with church are very dedicated and supportive and particularly interested in Christian teaching.
- Importance of striking the balance between social, physical and spiritual elements.
- Support for existing leaders and recruitment of leaders is needed.
- Definite interest in working in cooperation with other organisations.
- Boys' Brigade, supported and developed within the parish, has the capacity to develop community around the church.

4.3.1.8 Bishop's Youth Advisory Committee

- At times there may be a perceived lack of strategy and forward, mid-term planning in relation to Diocesan youth work.
- The Committee does not have Terms of Reference.
- It was noted that the budget is managed by Finance Committee.
- The Committee does not regularly report back to Diocesan Council.
- There appears to be a degree of frustration and fatigue regarding the limit on the work that the Committee is able to do, and the perceived absence of support or interest shown by the wider church.
- The sustainability of youth work and specifically the consideration of the appointment of a Diocesan Youth Officer could be looked at to ensure that active focus on youth continues.
- A relational model of engagement was viewed as pivotal to youth involvement in Church life by creating a safe space to explore faith, community and social justice issues.

4.3.1.9 Diocesan Children's Officer

- The role of the Diocesan Children's Officer is likely to be best suited to a person, preferably lay with theological training, who is interested in working with children.
- If the Diocese is to acknowledge its central role in the faith development of families, there needs to be a paid role with a clear job description and a set budget. This would provide a hub to enable strategic planning for the Diocese, coordinate information on activities in parishes, liaise with and support volunteers already working with children, and facilitate activities and training. Ideally this person would understand the rural context of our Diocese.
- Children's Ministry needs to be separated from Safeguarding in order to avoid a conflict of interest. Safeguarding is an administrative role.
- There needs to be buy-in from parishes and the Diocese into children's work but for that to take place the role of the Diocesan Children's Officer would benefit from a more secure footing and structure.

4.3.1.10 Diocesan Nominators

- Some concerns raised about the current model of appointments; time bound process.
- The small number of applications for vacancies is a considerable and critical challenge for the Diocese.
- Changes to the appointment process will be bound by the procedures of a motion being raised and passed by the General Synod.
- Long tenure for clergy.

4.3.1.11 Parochial Nominators

- The role and responsibilities of Parochial Nominators should be made clear in order to manage expectations.
- Perhaps a Clergy and parish review/appraisal that is constructive and supportive.
- The voice of parishioners should be considered in the type of ministry they want and is best suited to the congregation.
- The demographic profile of the parish should be taken into account to understand the financial viability of the parish in terms of sustentation and fund raising.
- Parishes should be aware of the detailed breakdown of the financial costs required to maintain the Rector and rectory.
- A review process should be introduced to manage any initial difficulties with new appointments and work together to create an action plan.

4.4 Parish Finance Information

Each Treasurer (as named on the Easter Vestry Meeting returns to the Diocesan office) was asked to submit specific information on finances. The returns were examined, and a cumulative account of the data gathered as detailed below. It is apparent from the returns that there is a **predominant reliance on weekly envelopes** for income generation although 50% have direct debits set up. There is a similar reliance on **fundraising** (92%).

The impact of COVID on the wellbeing of the parish was far reaching and included the reduction of financial security. This was exacerbated by the absence of fundraising events and church closures which prevented the collection of weekly envelopes. Although it was noted that over this time there was an increase in Direct Debit contributions. It was acknowledged that the appointment of a liaison officer for the Diocese and parishes in communicating with the Charity Regulator and Representative Church Body (RCB) is a valuable support to parish treasurers.

4.4.1 Respondents Income Review

- **24 returns received.** Returns related in some instances to Union returns and others to individual parishes within a group.
- One has a form of **Stewardship scheme** in place. Stewardship is generally a system where the total parish financial needs are calculated, and contributions are made accordingly.
- 96% use **weekly envelopes**.
- 50% are operating **direct debit schemes**. This was particularly taken up during Covid.
- 54% use other forms of **direct giving**.
- 92% use fundraising. **Fundraising** severely impacted during Covid. There was a drop in fundraising income for one parish of €20,000 p.a. due to inability to hold what had been an annual event. This marks a loss of €60,000 over 3 years.
- 50% have some **rental income**. Larger churches, e.g., Cathedrals or those based in large centres, generate some income through events.
- 58% have some **investment income** but there were a small number of examples of this.
- 46% operate gift days. **Gift Days** used by some for Parochial needs and others to respond to appeals for aid.
- A percentage of those who are considered parishioners make no direct contribution towards the financial wellbeing of the parish.
- In some instances, financial contributions **were made on behalf of families which could be intergenerational**.

4.4.2 Returns

Figure 4a details the trends across the Diocese in terms of the age breakdown from the gathered information. Inspection of this data clearly indicates that there is a disproportionate level of contribution across the age cohorts, and as such a reliance in parishioners over 45 years of age, across all respondents.

The differences are further accentuated by the fact that the largest percentage of financial giving (60-80%) is predominantly from those over 65 years.

Figure 4a: Trends in age profile of those contributing directly to parish finances

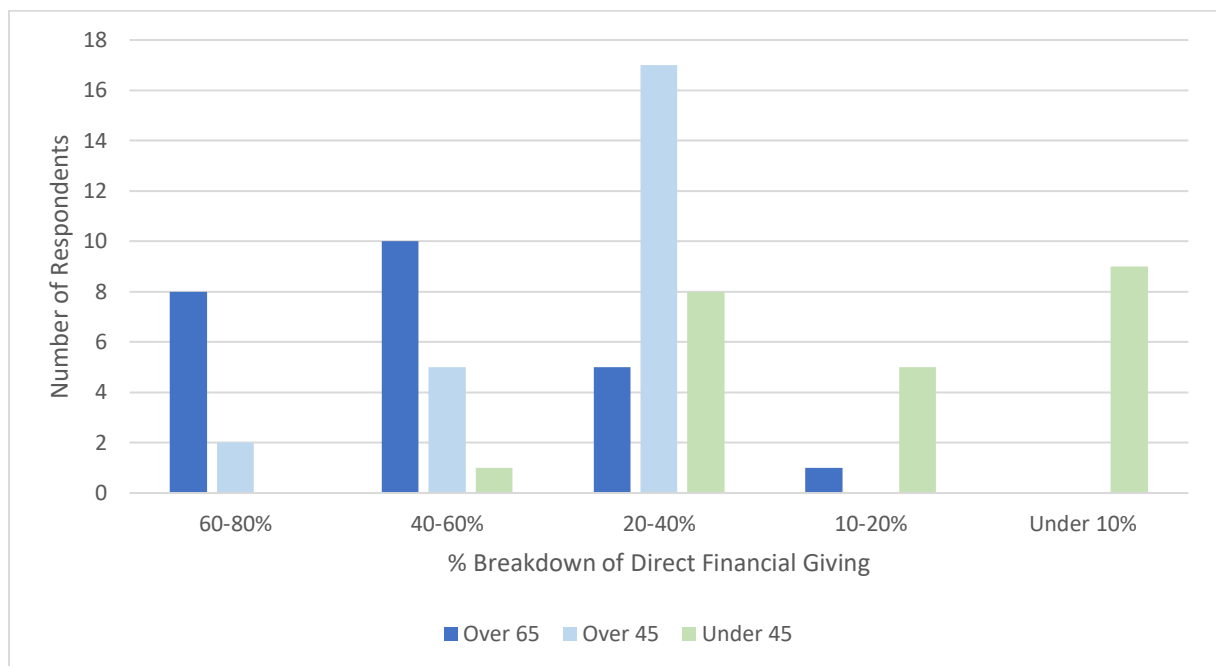
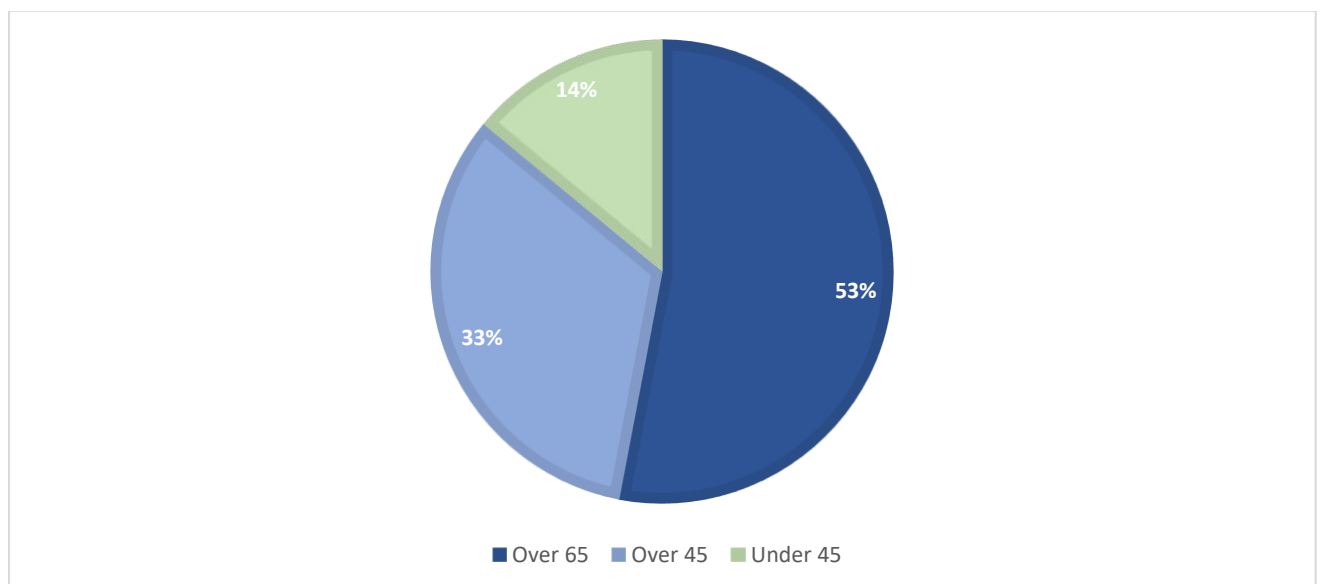


Figure 4b distils this information further to illustrate the differentiation in the age distribution of direct giving trends across the Diocese. This clearly shows that the majority of financial giving is provided by over 65-year old's (53%), 33% by parishioners over 45 years of age and 14% by the under 45 age group.

Figure 4b: Distribution of direct financial giving by age profile*



****Direct financial giving, does not include rental income, fundraising or investment income***

4.5 Clergy Feedback

4.5.1 Questionnaire-Phase 1

This refers to responses gathered from serving clergy in October 2019 using a structured questionnaire. Questions were organised into seven key areas, each with a set of sub-questions. These explored faith, ministry, vision, the Commission, and defining characteristics of the individual and of the Diocese.

The framework method for thematic analysis was applied to open ended survey responses. Codes were identified and aggregated to form category themes. The frequency of themes and corresponding codes were counted and ranked. The top three categories and codes were selected for inclusion in the main findings of the report. These are described in this section in tabular and graphical form.

4.5.1.1 Ministry and Outreach

Questions about lay ministry and outreach to the community were explored with clergy. Ways in which laity were supported to discover and develop their spiritual gifts included the liturgy, in conversation and interactions and in formalised groups (Table 3).

Table 3: In what ways do you assist the laity, to discover and develop their spiritual gifts and to live them out?

Response	Details	Ranking (Prioritising)
Liturgy	Preaching (Bible based sermons)/providing rich liturgy/involvement in a wide range of liturgical activities/various types of worship	1
Conversation and encouragement	Pastoral visits/one to one conversation/affirmation and encouragement/being available.	1
Groups	Monthly meeting of spirituality group/weekly Lectio Divina/regular Bible study.	3

Engaging in community outreach, whether locally, nationally, or further afield took place in a variety of ways. Community involvement might have been through organised or structured events within the Church community or wider civic society. Charities such as Christian or faith-based charities could facilitate outreach beyond the local or national community. Preaching and attending ecumenical gatherings were also listed as intentional actions to promote outreach and service (Table 4).

Table 4: Intentionally encouraging service and outreach in the local, national and global community

Response	Details	Ranking (Prioritising)
Community involvement	Build-up friendships in wider community/attend local events/engage in civic services.	1
Charity	Donating to/working with charities/SVP/Christian Aid/Bishops' Appeal/'bucket' collections in Churches for charity.	2
Preaching	Inclusive messages.	3
Ecumenism	Ecumenical gatherings/events.	3

Engaging with the wider community beyond the Church of Ireland was likely to take place at local events or through ecumenism. Charities and schools also offered opportunities to be part of the civic ecosystem of their local community.

Clergy shared about different ways in which they have reached out to non-attenders within the parish community (Table 5). This varied from one-to-one interactions to group-based activities they were attending. The overall tone noted in clergy responses was one of warmth and welcome when returning to the Church.

Table 5: Intentionally reaching out to non-attenders in the parish community

Response	Details	Ranking (Prioritising)
Visiting	Visiting/letting them know they are welcome in Church/personally inviting them	1
Local events	Through local group events and activities, such as bowls/whist drives/Tidy Towns/being active in local community	2
Conversation	Converse with them when I meet them out and about/make welcome whenever I encounter them	3
Local media/Newsletter	Parish newsletter/weekly article in local newspaper/communications/radio interviews/posters	3

Decision making structures within the parish were primarily considered to be the responsibility of the rector. In this regard, the culture of 'rector-led' dependency was cited as creating difficulties and placing many burdens on clergy. Other examples of shared decision making were provided by way of Vestrys, sub-groups and Churchwardens. A participatory approach to leadership was viewed as encouraging congregation's participation in and ownership of parish life (Table 6).

Table 6: Sharing leadership, decision making and responsibility within the parish.

Response	Details	Ranking (Prioritising)
With difficulty	Difficult to break out of 'rector-led' culture/majority of burdens left to rector/rector seen as the 'paid professional'/all decisions 'left to me'/long history of clergy-dependency where rector does everything/have encouraged shared leadership but was 'firmly rebuffed'.	1
By ways of Vestry	By enabling/empowering Select Vestry to make good decisions/have good discussions/utilise strengths and advice of SV members/sub-groups of Vestry/discuss with Churchwardens or Vestry.	2
With encouragement	Share as much as is feasible, so congregation fully participate/encourage others to be part of decision-making process/ seasonal preparation groups.	3

4.5.1.2 Experience of Ministry

Clergy commented on the different aspects of parish and Diocesan life that were more challenging. The weight of expectations married with administrative burdens appeared to impact clergy faith (Table 7).

In terms of accountability, there was a consensus that clergy themselves feel that they are held firmly to account by their parish and the Diocese. However, it was recognised that there was no formal structured approach to this and for some it was more of a supportive and empathetic approach.

Table 7: Challenging aspects of parish and/or diocesan life

Response	Details	Ranking (Prioritising)
Parishioners	Unrealistic expectations; lack of understanding; constant negativity; bearing the weight of parishioners' frustrations; impatience and anger are commonplace; bullying by parishioners.	1
Diocese	lack of competence (obstructiveness) around financial transparency/Diocesan disconnect from realities in the parishes	2
Admin	Overload of admin/compliance demands.	3
Clerical colleagues	Misery and pessimism; 'toxic' behaviour/clergy meetings (especially at Clergy Conference)	3
Meanness	General meanness/nastiness/meanness of attitude.	3
Isolation	Isolation from colleagues.	3
Loss of faith	Poor attendance at services/reluctance to support another parish/lack of interest in God or Christianity.	3

Diocesan meetings	Diocesan meetings need shorter plenary sessions and to be more task focused. Perceived micro-managing by Diocese.	3
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4.5.1.3 Vision

This section examined in detail the vision clergy held for their parish. There was a small number of clergy who indicated they did not have a vision as such because they were in maintenance mode, or their parishioners were disengaged which made it difficult to cultivate a vision beyond the current time.

The focus on growing and strengthening community and faith featured most frequently in the responses shared. While some indicated that a reduction in the number of parishes was part of their plan for the future, others described the expansion of parish boundaries to accommodate a growing community facilitated by collaborative ministry as being necessary in the future (Table 8).

Steps taken to implement the vision would involve **consultation and encouragement** through:

- Conversations.
- Vestry and sub-committees.
- Prayer and worship.

Delivering the vision would require a number of different inputs and changes including:

- Admin.
- Evangelism.
- Assistance.
- Apathy.

Table 8: Vision for the parish

Response	Details	Ranking (Prioritising)
Community	To grow as a Church community/build up worshipping family/to build an open, prophetic, exemplary Christian community.	1
Faith	Help people to grow in faith in Christ, personally and collectively/foster spiritual growth.	2
Reduction of Parishes	Future of parishes is amalgamation/need to centralise ministry to large towns.	2
Kindness	Care, healing, kindness, availability, mutual support.	3
Growth of Parishes	Wish to see parish engaged in collaborative ministry involving everyone; a collective vision for the next ten years/work together in teams to achieve a vision/affirm and support parishioners.	3
No vision	Takes all of effort to keep parish in maintenance-mode.	3

Consideration of challenges for the parish and Diocese in the immediate and long-term led clergy to identify finance, demographics and parishioner interest in Church as the main barriers to future development (Table 9).

Table 9: Challenges for the parish and Diocese in the immediate and long-term future

Response	Details	Ranking (Prioritising)
Finance	Financial challenges ('cliff-edge' in parish and Diocese)/paying bills/withholding sustentation is used as a weapon.	1
Age profile	Aging population/involving young people/number of parishioners/fewer parishioners/connecting with millennials.	2
Apathy	Sense of weariness/non-attendance/lack of interest/less attenders and few paying into parishes.	3

Strengthening the mission and witness of the Church in the Diocese was explored within the survey. The following suggestions were put forward:

- **Consolidation**
 - Close many country churches/need consolidation of resources, have deanery 'super-groups' with a team approach.
- **Relevance**
 - There needs to be vocal statements on 'live' issues/Church needs to have a presence in assisting/dealing with societal issues.
- **Preaching/Sharing**
 - By preaching and teaching the Gospel/educate clergy and laity about how to spread good news of Christ.
- **Youth training**
 - Develop social programmes for the youth to foster their sense of responsibility.

Proposals on potential new models of Ministry were recorded by clergy in response to concerns about the relevance and sustainability of existing models. Suggestions which appeared most frequently were linked to the administrative burden on clergy, re-engineering parish boundaries and the creation of Team Ministry that combines clergy with lay designates who strengthen the spiritual and pastoral resource of the parish (Table 10).

Table 10: Alternative models of Ministry

Response	Details	Ranking (Prioritising)
Admin	Develop a central admin and fundraising hub/administrators could be appointed to clusters of parishes/ rector needs to focus on pastoral issues/appoint a diocesan administrator.	1
Parish structures	Redraw parish boundaries around main urban catchment areas (shopping, banking), and provide services there for children, youth, and adults/group smaller parishes into a hub/amalgamation after church closures/more flexible parish structure with clergy teams.	2
Team Ministry	To include one rector and several OLM clergy/OLM is interesting/OLM has potential, especially if allowed take charge of one Church in a parish/more fluid arrangements across areas allowing ministry in schools/hospitals.	3

Innovations relating to the promotion of the Gospel message were explored in the survey. A number of suggestions centered on the use of digital media, creative arts, and the reoccurrence of past events that had proved successful:

- **Technology**
 - Modern technology; develop on-line resources, Sunday service on You-tube, Christian music and hymns, daily devotions; podcasts.
- **Music/arts**
 - Use more modern music/modern instruments/ host music festivals/arts and music/use drama and film to tell Gospel story.
- **More initiatives like Pentecost Event**

4.6 Clergy Workshops

The consultation method used for parish discussions groups was used in clergy workshops. The same reporting structure has been applied to highlight and describe the issues and concerns of clergy.

The identified themes were visible in the responses to the clergy survey and to the workshop questions (Table 11). Clergy made suggestions that would have individual, parish, Diocese, and Church wide impacts. While a number of positives were highlighted in the discussions, these were balanced against challenges that would need to be overcome or managed in order to move forward. Similarly, consideration of future hopes was plotted alongside requests to pinpoint fears that needed to be alleviated. It was evident that change was seen as overdue but would require small- and large-scale amendments to existing processes and traditions.

Table 11: Framework Analysis

CODE	DESCRIPTION
Positives (What is moving the boat forward)	
Parish	Home visits; The faithful few; Strong core in parish; Friendly; Caring; Inclusive people; Supportive laity; Good, strong structures in place; Positive parochial system; Clear objectives; Identifying what the needs are; Friendly; Home visits.
Diocese	Chaplaincy training supported by Diocese; Commission process; Perception of the Diocese been progressive on LGBT issues; Bishop Michael's legacy.
Clergy	Enthusiastic clergy; A leader who listens; Friendship among clergy-no cliques; Motivated; Bishop; Prayer; Family; Faithfulness; Assistant priest; Clergy leadership; Genuine Collegiality between clergy.
Youth	School visits; BB; GFS; Generous youth budget
Buildings (Fabric)	Beautiful buildings; Holds history of the parish; Scenic location of Churches; Doors kept open to the public; Historical and beautiful.
Faith	Prayer; Daily office; Hope; Faith filled energy.
Church	Welcoming Churches; Connections with other Church faiths.
Challenges (What is holding the boat back)	
Parish	Need better engagement; Lack of interest in the Church; Narrow parochialism; Tribalism; Lack of education in not only their faith but also in the way the Church is run; Disaffected; Criticism; Bullying; Nostalgia for a Church that no longer exists.
Clergy	Huge expectation placed upon clergy. Fear of letting people down; Not enough time for pastoral matters; Too much administration for clergy to do; Pressure/expectations on clergy; Disharmony affecting clergy welfare; Clerical guilt.
Financial	Always to the fore; Focus on finance despite parish managing well; Vacancies.
Admin	Too many committees.
Youth	How to engage young people; No young people.
Buildings (Fabric)	Provides headaches; Too many open.
Church	Too slow to act; indecisive; Inaction; Lack of organisation; Positive new models – increased lay ministry; No ministry co-workers; Growth of administration; Intransigence – not able or open or willing to change.
Future (what lies ahead if we continue as we're going)	
Parish/Community	Diminishing numbers; Decline; Need for growth; Unions may remain same size but likely to increase; Where once two colleagues now none; No young people in Church; Collapse of existing parish structures.
Clergy	Understaffed; Clergy stress and burnout; Fall away in clergy and lay leadership; More joined up thinking.
Financial	Too many Churches; No finance for paid clergy; Need to consolidate; Financial troubles.

Youth	Youth outings; Encourage youth; Encourage young families.
Buildings (Fabric)	Rising costs of keeping buildings open; Empty Churches.
Faith	Lack of faith; Spiritually depleted.
Church	Dead; Closed; Halved and struggling; Irrelevant; Exhausted. Need to plan; Need to evaluate; No clear direction; Covid showed an adaptable Church.

4.6.1 Working towards Solutions

4.6.1.1 Problems selected to generate solution ideas.

Clergy proposed a list of issues they believed were worth considering in the future development of the Diocese. These then underpinned the solutions and ideas put forward as either 'quick wins' or 'major projects'. Taken together they formed a **wish list of change** that would fortify a strong and growing faith community in the Diocese.

- Apathy
- Expectations
- Narrow parochialism
- Building worship
- Clergy Welfare
- Lay engagement
- Organisation
- Finance
- Management of Administration workload
- Change management/negative mindsets/fear of change
- New models of Ministry
- Empowering Volunteers
- Attitude to Church buildings
- Family and youth
- Bullying

4.6.1.2 Popular Solution Ideas

A thematic analysis of the responses was transposed into the matrix which plots 'quick wins' against 'major projects' (Figures 4 and 5).

There were a number of the participants' ideas that could be grouped under the same theme for both 'quick wins' and 'major projects'. These are presented at the start of the table. Discreet ideas listed only as 'quick wins' or 'major projects' were recorded at the end of the table. Descriptions used to expand the idea were aligned to the key themes identified in the analysis.

Collectively, the list of solutions (micro and macro) is perceived to be the roadmap to an implementation plan that brings the Commission findings to life.

Figure 4: Clergy Solution Matrix (Quick Wins)

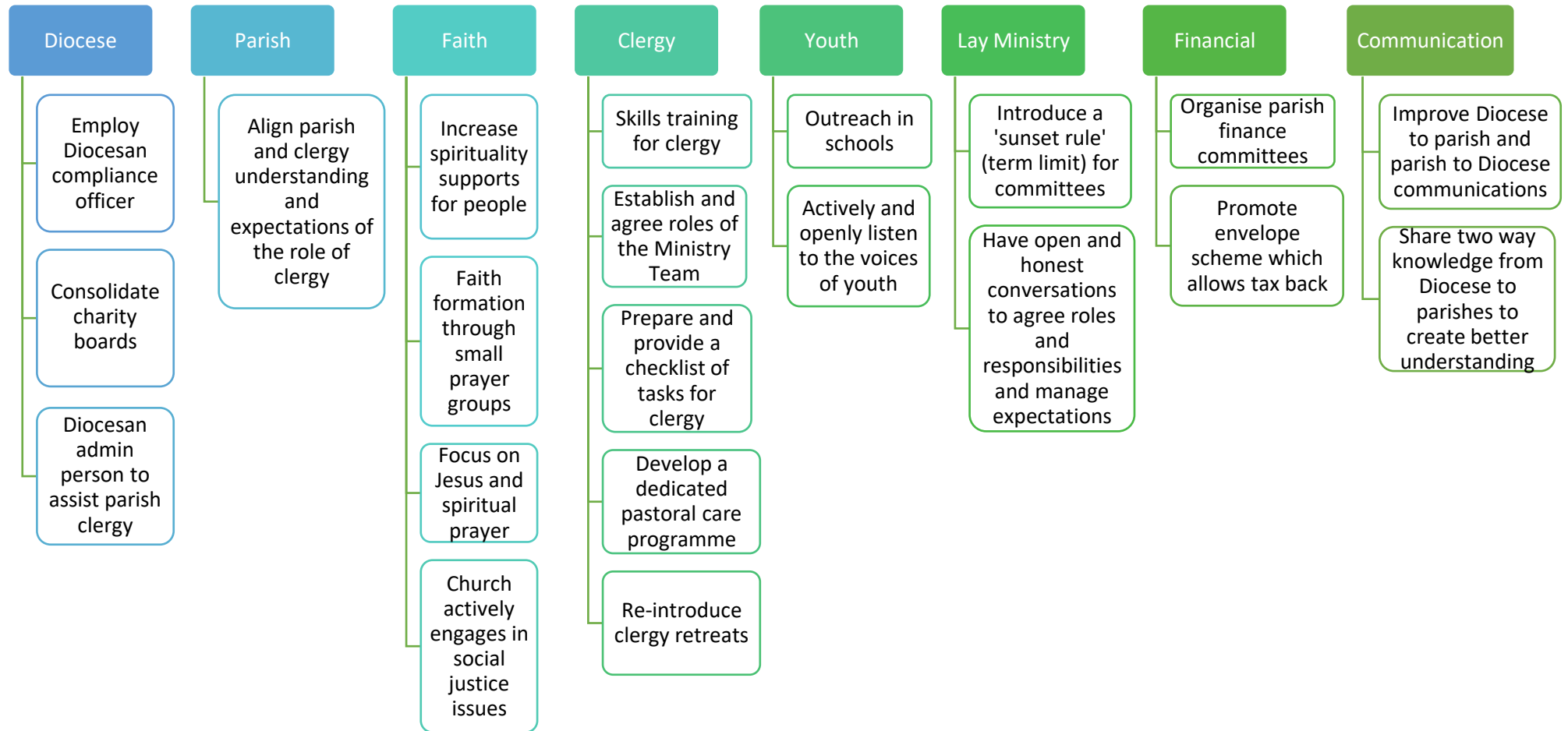
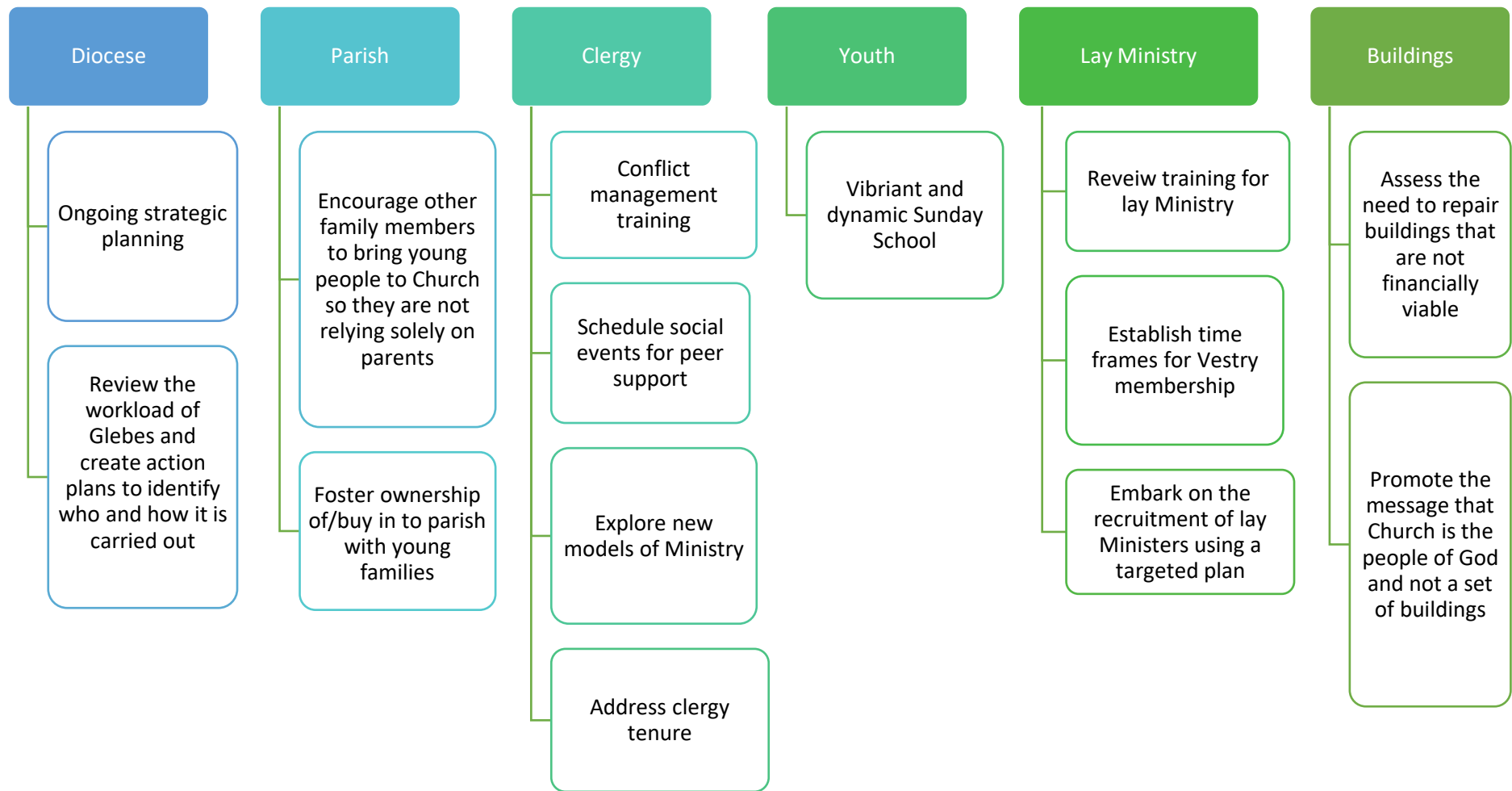


Figure 5: Clergy Solution Matrix (Major Projects)



4.7 Retired Clergy-Survey

The same thematic categories were used to construct questions relevant to retired clergy which would inform the recommendations of the Commission. This is a small sample (43% responded) and as such caution should be used when generalising the findings.

4.7.1 Ministry and Outreach

Involving lay members of the Church in Ministry was viewed as one of the main ways clergy were assisted to discover and develop their spiritual gifts. Prayer groups, preaching and pastoral care were other examples of helping laity embody their spirit.

Other engagements with laity including sharing decisions pertinent to parish life with the Select Vestry.

Engaging the wider community beyond the Church generally involved attending ecumenical events and having a fraternity with clergy from other faiths.

4.7.2 Vision

Retired clergy commented on what might support and strengthen visions for ministry in the Church. Suggestions around curacies for junior clergy, better training and administrative assistance were all noted. However, the challenge of ministry in a secular society meant finding imaginative and compelling ways to remain relevant to it. Church closures were noted but less often than the changed landscape of the socio-political environment of Ireland.

Strengthening the mission and witness of the Church in the Diocese was viewed by retired clergy as requiring many different actions. These included:

- Trust God
- Give hope, exhilaration, involve everyone
- Children's work
- Churches open for various uses
- Transition Year/Work experience
- Develop Diocesan website

5.0 Conclusion

The Diocesan Review Commission has engaged in a comprehensive consultation process. Opportunities to contribute to the Commission were offered at all levels of Diocesan life and across Diocesan structures. This level of consultation ensures that diverse perspectives have contributed to the formation of a shared future.

The information gathered and analysis completed has provided an evidenced-based foundation for the recommendations made.

It is anticipated that by endorsing an implementation plan, **Diocesan Synod will provide a pathway for addressing the challenges, concerns and needs expressed by stakeholders across the Diocese.** The consistent reiteration of the themes identified in the Review pointed to the reliability of the findings and the confidence the Commission has in offering a vision for the Diocese.

The themes below reflect the **role of people** (laity/clergy), **place** (parish/Diocese) and **process** (finances, administration, communication).

- Church Services
- Parish/Community
- Clergy
- Youth
- Buildings
- Faith
- Finances
- Communication
- Administration
- Volunteers
- Church of Ireland

The protection of faith, the Gospel and Christian life was an overwhelming driver of engagement with the Commission.

Many contributors highlighted the rapid secularisation of society and the impact this is having on parishes as a very significant factor in the erosion of the generational witnessing to the Gospel.

Families and youth were viewed as a potentially positive resource to prevent the disintegration of Church and Christian values. By nurturing young members of the Church and bridging faith and family in modern life, the collision of traditional and secular lifestyles could be avoided.

The task given by Diocesan Synod has guided the direction of the Commission and provided a framework within which to understand needs and cultivate options.

The challenges facing the Church are **considerable**. Yet, it is remarkable that the **faithful service** of so many keeps the witness of the Church alive across the Diocese. It is unarguable that current realities require fresh ways of thinking, and **a willingness to change and to work together**.

Those charged with leadership roles in the Diocese **deserve our prayers and whole-hearted support**. Equally, those who are active members of the Church, across parishes and Church organisations/committees, **deserve to be consulted, listened to, and involved** in decisions which will shape the future of the Diocese.

Centrally taken 'top-down' decisions, whilst affording the benefit of prompt results, risk disempowering/estranging many of those who will be affected by those decisions. The task of consultation is doubtless a slow, and painstaking one. It is a task, however, which has been begun by the work of the Commission. Invitations to meet, to consult and to plan were warmly accepted by all constituents who were approached by the Commission. The sincerity, and attachment of all those who dialogued with us, to their faith and to their Church, **provides ample reason for optimism and hope. So many good people are doing so many good things in service of the Church**. Commission members earnestly hope that this process of consultation offers both a model, and a concrete way forward.

6.0. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are ordered under the following headings:

- 6.1 Parishes
- 6.2 Faith/Church Life
- 6.3 Clerical Ministry
- 6.4 Lay Ministry
- 6.5 Youth/Children/Schools
- 6.6 Finance
- 6.7 Miscellaneous

6.1 PARISHES

6.1.1 Vacancy Committees:

It is recommended that, upon a parochial vacancy occurring within the Diocese, Diocesan Council establish and elect a short-term sub-committee, (to be known as a “**Diocesan Vacancy Committee**”) to advise and consult with the vacant parish as soon as possible. It is recognised that there may be several such committees functioning at any one time.

Membership:

Bishop (or his/her representative)
Rural Dean of the Rural Deanery wherein the parish is situated
One Representative of Finance Committee, and
One member of Diocesan Council (not to be a parishioner of the vacant Parish)

Terms of Reference:

The Committee will function with the following remit:

First Steps:

Immediately upon a parish becoming vacant, and in advance of a Board of Nomination being called pursuant to Article 11, Chapter 4 of the Constitution, the appointed Committee will meet with the Select Vestry of that parish to ensure clarity over the following:

- **Pastoral care during the vacancy:** who has pastoral oversight; plan for church services; school cover (etc.)
- **Governance matters during a vacancy:** chairing of Select and General Easter Vestry; signing off on forms normally dealt with by a rector/priest-in-charge.
- **Finance:** diocesan assessments: how savings during a vacancy are calculated, and when they are credited to a parish.

Consultation:

The Committee will consult with the parish concerning future ministry in the parish noting:

- Parish expectations for clerical ministry into the future;
- Pastoral priorities into the future;
- Parish resources;

- Parish plans to cover the costs associated with ministry into the future; and
- Rectory requirements for a rector/priest-in-charge into the future

The Committee will encourage the parish to prepare and take ownership of their parish profile, with a developed template and guidance from the Diocesan Office.

Consideration of sustainable Ministry:

In conducting consultation with a vacant parish, the Committee should guide a realistic consideration of options for sustainable ministry within the parish.

Such options may include:

- the **development of team ministry within the parish**. Assistance, and guidance should be afforded to the parish by the Committee, and request made to Council for the provision of any appropriate resources;
- the **re-purposing/layout/alteration/deconsecration of a church building within the parish**. Whilst any such decision is, in the first instance, the prerogative of the Select Vestry of the parish, all appropriate advice and guidance should be provided by the Committee (to this end, it is recommended that an explanatory memorandum be prepared, under the auspices of Diocesan Council, regarding the closing/deconsecration of church buildings, including the financial ramifications thereof, to be provided as necessary to Select Vestries).
- the **alteration of parish boundaries**. Any such alteration would be dealt with pursuant to the provisions of Article 27, Chapter 3 of the Constitution. Should parish boundary alteration be deemed to be a viable option, the Committee shall refer the matter immediately to the Diocesan Council, who shall commence an exploration of the matter in consultation with the parishes involved.

The **Vacancy Committee will report back to Diocesan Council** in a timely manner concerning the wishes of the parish for future ministry, and the financial viability of those plans. Following such reporting, and subject to any contrary decision of Diocesan Council, the Committee shall have discharged its function.

6.2 FAITH/CHURCH LIFE

6.2.1. Adult Faith Development:

Key to the life of the Church is the **nourishment and support of the faith of its members**. To this end the Commission recommends that Diocesan Synod explore **ways of supporting the provision of adult faith development**. It is recommended that ways are found:

- to **foster a greater understanding of Scripture**. This might include the resourcing of clergy or others to lead occasional Scripture study- groups such as during Lent/Advent;
- in like manner, to afford **an opportunity for laity to explore and learn basic theology**, so as to gain core theological understanding; including the Diocesan sponsoring of presentations/lectures;
- to continue to support such initiatives as the **Certificate in Christian Studies** programme;

- to continue/increase support to those **Diocesan voluntary groups which incorporate Christian witness to social justice**, by welcoming/supporting initiatives from new or existing groups within the Diocese (including ecumenical projects);
- to welcome and resource any fresh faith initiatives/requests presenting from parochial level, such as **pilgrimage, prayer groups, and retreats** (including the provision of bursaries to facilitate such endeavours).

It is recognised that much valuable work was done heretofore in the Diocese by an Adult Faith Education Officer. In recognition of the importance of such work, **it is recommended that the part-time, paid position of Diocesan Adult Faith Education/Clergy Training Officer be (re)established**. Such an Officer ought also to co-ordinate ongoing 'continuing professional development' training for clergy (see Strengthening of Clergy Supports recommendations). It is envisaged that this role might readily be combined with a part-time clerical position within the Diocese

6.2.2 Worship: Mission & witness of the Church:

In all the meetings with parishes in the Diocese it was widely recognised that **regular Sunday worship was one of the biggest 'winds in the sails' of our Church**. The amount of time Clergy spend in preparing for worship, writing sermons and then providing meaningful worship was appreciated and respected.

This being the case there was an **expressed wish for different types of services** e.g.

- mid-week services or Saturday night services to try to combat the loss of youth to Sunday morning sports;
- more modern types of services as allowed by the Church;
- more use of the Service of the Word;
- occasional services directed at specific age groups, such as Youth services with modern music for the young; or the use of Prayer 1 format for the older parishioners; or children's services with seasonal themes.

The need for **more accessible, inclusive and welcoming buildings and literature** was also expressed in order to encourage more people to attend and participate in worship.

6.3 CLERICAL MINISTRY

6.3.1 Sustainable Models of Ministry

The Commission places on record the **gratitude** of everyone throughout the diocese to those who, in diverse ways, already play their part in the ministry of God's Kingdom i.e., to those who serve in many roles within the daily life of any parish.

It is acknowledged that the **dwindling number of ordinands in training**, coupled with the **anticipated retirements in the short term** throughout the Church of Ireland, **presents serious obstacles to the maintenance of parochial ministry** as currently formed. In such a climate, the potential of **new sustainable models of ministry needs to be considered**.

Team Ministry:

One such model is ‘team ministry’, which already exists in practice within the Diocese. It is recognised that team ministry brings advantages and challenges.

Advantages include:

- an opportunity for those in ministry to ‘play to their strengths’;
- an enrichment of ministry for parishioners;
- an occasion for mutual pastoral support for clergy;
- opportunities to explore creative alternatives to traditional liturgy;
- an economically efficient way of providing resources to parishes.

Challenges include:

- difficulties in transitioning to a team ministry model;
- ambiguities in questions of authority;
- adaptation to greater levels of collaboration;
- need for additional training/guidance in (shared) leadership roles.

Recommendation:

- **Existing models of team ministry be recognised, fostered, and replicated.**

This includes models where:

- ordained local ministers/diocesan readers/parish readers work collaboratively with and under the direction of the rector/priest-in-charge so as to provide liturgical and pastoral services within a parish/parishes;
- neighbouring clergy work together to provide pastoral cover for their mutual parishes during time off;
- lay volunteers are trained and commissioned to act as liturgical assistants;

- **New models of team ministry be considered and explored.**

This includes models where:

- two or more rectors/priests-in-charge work together, with the support of ordained local ministers, diocesan and parish readers, liturgical assistants, and others to provide liturgical and pastoral services to multiple parishes which have been grouped together under the direction of the Bishop, Archdeacons, and Diocesan Council;
- two or more rectors/priests-in-charge voluntarily agree to work together across parish boundaries, to facilitate the mutual sharing of their areas of interest/expertise (e.g., one clergy might excel at youth ministry, and thus take on youth activities across the two parishes, whilst the other might have particular skill at charitable outreach and lead parish activities in that area across the two parishes. Alternatively, they may agree to work together across both parishes).
- lay volunteers are trained and commissioned to act as parochial visitors;
- lay volunteers are trained and resourced to act as administrative assistants to parish(es), in areas such as data protection, charity regulation etc.

- the expertise and skill of lay members is recognised and harnessed to assist in the everyday life of the parish (areas such as musical ability and talent/communications skills etc.)

It is recognised that there is **some appetite amongst those who addressed the Commission for a grouping together of parishes into 'hubs' which would be supported by team ministry**. This, it was suggested, might be focused on large urban centres; on rural deanery areas; or around cathedrals. Recognising the validity of such suggestions, the Commission is nonetheless convinced, following its wide-ranging consultation, that the 'drawing of lines on a map' fails to adequately recognise the complexity of the challenge.

The building of team ministry is a process which can only be achieved by the willing support and acceptance of all members, both clerical and lay, of the proposed team, as well as by the broad sweep of parishioners whom they purport to serve. It is **best nurtured by broadly based conversations about the future of the Church**.

Thus, it is recommended that:

- opportunities are taken by the Vacancy Committees, in consulting with parishes, to introduce and **encourage the adoption of a team ministry approach**;
- that the **viability of the formation of team ministry be central to any decisions** which may be taken by Diocesan Council concerning the proposed amalgamation of parishes or the alteration of parish boundaries;
- on-going professional development for Clergy includes specific training on team ministry; collaborative working; and shared leadership.

New Models of Ministry:

It is recommended that New Models/Ways of Ministry be explored.

For example:

- It is recommended that the recent initiative within the wider church of **PIONEER MINISTRY be fully explored** with the view to seeing how this could be used within rural dioceses such as ours. The hope and heart of this new initiative will be **to encourage, support and release a new movement that has the capacity to reach new people in new places in new ways**.

"All current parishes and ministries were at some point "something new" and a means of connecting with the culture and community of their own age and context. Pioneering is not a new idea, but something intrinsic to the church throughout history. The vision is for Pioneer Ministry to be a movement which will offer a renewed focus for the church to connect in fresh ways with those with whom it has lost connection. It will advocate for, champion, support and encourage every parish, chaplaincy, ministry, and network within the Church of Ireland in reaching those with little or no connection to church." <https://www.pioneerministry.org/the-vision/>

Pioneer Ministries exist in addition to, rather than instead of, traditional approaches that the Church is currently using to reach out to and engage with those around it. Pioneer Ministry plays its role within the life of the Church, with traditional and new ministries complementing each other and honouring each other through mutual prayer, respect, recognition and learning.

Diocesan Pioneer Ministry Hubs

The Diocesan Pioneer Ministry Hubs are made up of a key group of people in each diocese who work with the **Pioneer Leadership Team** to champion, advocate, support and drive pioneer ministry in every diocese.

These hubs exist to advocate and champion Pioneer Ministry across their diocese across all activities, ministries, synods, councils and other bodies. They help identify, train and support Diocesan Pioneers as well as spearhead the delivery of training and resources.

They support the Bishop and diocese with proposals for match-funded pioneer projects and new pioneers and provide wide-ranging support to diocesan pioneer initiatives. Further, they look to grow funding and resources for Pioneer Ministry, facilitate the Learning Communities and support the Pioneer.

6.3.2 Further strengthening of Clergy Supports

Wellbeing

Clergy must be encouraged and assisted to take time for self-care and care of their families. To this end we recommend:

- Scheduled days off coordinated with neighbouring clergy and parish
- Making use of the valuable *Mind Matters* service initiative, with support from laity, peers and the Bishop.

Collegiality and fellowship

We encourage more social activities for clergy during which they may engage with each other. Perhaps this can be achieved through the rural deanery setting.

New Incumbents to our Diocese

It is recommended that.

- new incumbents are provided with a mentor, especially if a first incumbency.
- new incumbents coming from a more urban area or outside the jurisdiction receive orientation training.

Administration

To support Clergy and to assist them with more time for dealing with pastoral work and self-care we recommend:

- The appointment of a paid Diocesan administration assistant who could take over much of the statutory paperwork involved with CRT, SGT applications for grants etc. This could be in conjunction with other roles which the Diocese feels appropriate.

Continuing Education for Clergy

In addition to the continuing educational opportunities provided by the Church of Ireland it is recommended that a formalised process is put in place to give Clergy within our Diocese an

opportunity to identify and request areas/topics of continuous professional development that they feel would further support their ministries.

- Attendance should be encouraged, if not mandatory,
- Some suggested topics from Clergy were:
 - Parochial governance
 - Team management
 - Conflict resolution
 - Dealing with statutory requirements
 - Opportunities to share

To this end it is recommended that the position of an Adult Faith Education/Clergy Training Officer be (re)instated to co-ordinate and facilitate the provision of such training. (See adult faith development recommendations)

6.3.3 Clergy Tenure:

Following parochial visits, the Commission became aware that situations of unease and difficulty may pertain in certain instances between clergy and parishioners. The resolution of such situations, for both parties, is not helped by the current provisions relating to tenure of office of an incumbent pursuant to Part VII of Chapter 4 of the Constitution. The Commission welcomes the initiatives currently being brought forward to General Synod for the purpose of reviewing this matter of clergy tenure.

6.3.4 Appointment of Clergy:

Cognisant of the current and future ministry needs within the Diocese, and the serious challenge presented in resourcing ordained ministry across the Diocese, the following recommendations are made with respect to the current process of appointments, as governed by Chapter 4 of the Constitution:

- that Diocesan Council consider a motion to General Synod, to amend Article 21, Chapter 4 of the Constitution, **to extend the period after which a right of appointment lapses to the Bishop**, from three months to six months (so as to afford greater scope and flexibility to the Board of Nomination process);

The Commission acknowledges the valuable contribution made by all those who serve the Diocese in connection with the appointment of Clergy, whether as diocesan, or parochial, nominators. In support of the work of nominators, it is recommended:

- that a **'profile of cure' template be developed**, under the auspices of the Diocesan Board of Patronage, to be furnished to parishes seeking to fill a vacancy, so as to assist their efforts;
- likewise, that an **explanatory memo for new parochial nominators** be prepared and circulated to parishes;
- that, upon a Board of Nomination being called, **the Diocesan Secretary would link closely with parochial nominators to advise/reiterate their roles and responsibilities**;
- that there is, as a matter of course, a **broad parochial input into the production of a parish profile** (this would happen, in dialogue with the acting Vacancy Committee).

Whilst recognising that the appointment of clergy is a spiritual process, it is nonetheless imperative that nominators, in conducting selection and interview processes, follow current best practice from both legal and human resource perspectives. To this end:

- it is recommended **that a template for an appropriate interview process be prepared** under the auspices of the Diocesan Board of Patronage and made available as appropriate.

6.3.5 Development of the Rural Deanery structure within the Diocese

Under Chp. 2, Article 44 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, Rural Deans shall perform such duties as are assigned to them by the Bishop. Whilst primarily designed for the inspection and up-keep of church buildings, the rural deanery network potentially provides an important supportive resource for Clergy and the Diocese.

It is recommended that:

- **rural deanery networks are developed** to further strengthen them as a support system for clergy,
- a Diocesan **role description for rural deans** be developed, and
- the **size of rural deaneries be reviewed** so that the rural deanery more closely reflects the area/region of present-day society. i.e., that rural deaneries would be centred in places of large population

To this end, it is recommended that rural deans' duties be extended to include:

- the organisation of meetings and social gatherings among those engaged in "ministry" within the rural deanery;
- the augmentation of "rural ministry", by means of assisting in the channeling of resources towards "rural ministry";
- the organisation of social and professional development opportunities for clergy within the rural deanery
- the pastoral support of clergy within the rural deanery;
- oversight for governance of parishes within the deanery.

It is recommended that rural deans assume the following roles when parishes within their deanery become vacant:

- act in consultation with the Bishop/Archdeacons, to provide support for ordained local ministers, Diocesan and Parish readers, Select Vestries etc in such vacant parishes. This would include the chairing of Select and Easter Vestries;
- be responsible, and accountable, for organising the Service of Institution;
- assist the "new incumbent" in their moving to the parish and settling into their new home (the Rectory)
- work with newly appointed incumbents to ensure that the Rectory is ready to occupy and as an advocate for Rectory preparations.
- organise the vacancy inspection and liaise with the Glebe wardens.

In support of the increased responsibilities of the rural dean, it is recommended that:

- they be given appropriate training;
- their role in relation to tri-annual building inspections be reviewed;
- the recompense for the role of rural dean be reviewed;

6.3.6 Ordained Local Ministry:

The Commission recognises and applauds the significant contribution to the life of the Diocese made by those in ordained local ministry. As a self-supporting ministry, it speaks to all that is best in committed Christian discipleship. Ordained local ministers operate in many parishes across the Diocese and constitute a vital part of team ministry. In many parishes, and most acutely in those which fall vacant, such ministers enable the continuation of normal liturgical services and pastoral care. We encourage those parishes, which are fortunate enough to enjoy the ministry of an ordained local minister, to find their own way to express appreciation for this valuable ministry.

6.4 LAY MINISTRY

6.4.1 Diocesan Readers & Parish Readers:

It is noted that Diocesan Readers and Parish Readers are separate licensed ministries. It is recognised that Parish Readers operate only under the guidance of the Rector/Priest-in-Charge within their own parish.

Diocesan Readers

Warden of Readers:

It is noted that Diocesan Readers find support and encouragement through opportunities for collegiality and continued training. The Warden of Readers provides a vital role in this regard.

It is recommended that:

- **regular training** continues to be offered, particularly around preaching, and the study of scriptures. (This will also assist in peer support and fellowship);
- requests for **additional funding** to resource such activity receive favourable consideration;
- **pastoral support** be provided to Readers on how to deal with issues (particularly of a confidential or conflictual nature) which may be raised with them when they visit parishes;

Appointment of a Co-ordinator:

It is noted practice that clergy and, in the case of vacant parishes, the Archdeacons call individual readers to arrange cover for services.

It is recommended that:

- a **voluntary co-ordinator for deployment of Diocesan Readers be appointed**, through an advertised request for an expression of interest, from the Diocesan Readers' team. The role, while **part time and of a secretarial nature**, will provide administrative and scheduling support. The person, will work collaboratively with the Warden of Readers to support this valuable resource and to ensure administrative efficiency in the following areas:
 - Provide and regularly update a **roster of readers** who are available to take services to be shared with, the Archdeacons, Rector/Priests in Charge.
 - Liaise with the relevant Charitable and Safeguarding officers to **support Readers and to ensure compliance** with Charitable and Safeguarding requirements.

General:

It is recommended that:

- the matter of **payment of expenses to Diocesan Readers be reviewed** considering situations in other Dioceses;
- the provision of a **central library**/resource of theological books for Readers be investigated;
- those who are charged with the responsibility for the provision of services in a parish give sensitive **consideration** to asking Diocesan Readers to travel considerable distances to conduct a service, when there may already be services in other churches in the group/union.

Parish Readers:

It is recommended that the system of Parish Readers and Liturgical Assistants be (re)established throughout the Diocese. (It is noted that Parish Reader and Liturgical Assistant training may be ongoing in some parishes).

- The role of parish reader is to regularly lead Morning Prayer, having had theological/liturgical training provided by the Rector and read a Sermon either prepared by the Rector/Priest in charge or from a source approved by them. Permission to conduct services lapses at the time of vacancy unless otherwise permitted by the Bishop.
- The role of liturgical assistant is to read the service of Morning Prayer for the congregation present, should a clergyperson/reader be unavailable at short notice. In addition, this role could include the task of assisting the celebrant with the administration of Holy Communion
- The role of parish reader/liturgical assistant offers a method of building the ministry team and providing support to clergy and parishes. The system of parish readers and liturgical assistants may also encourage and nurture candidates to further train and develop their gifts, callings and ministries.
- To this end, **clergy are encouraged to look to their parishioners to see if they can recognise those within their parish who may have a calling to lead liturgy.**
- A standardised template for the training of parish readers/liturgical assistants, based on what is working well, would be helpful for those clergy/parishes considering this system.
- Furthermore, a Rector/Priest in charge from a parish where such a system is in place, could offer advice and support to those parishes and incumbents who wish to establish such a system in their own parish.
- Diocesan guidance needs to be provided as to the provision of Communion by Extension.

6.4.2 Diocesan Voluntary Committees:

It is acknowledged that the Diocese owes a profound debt of gratitude to all those who serve, in a voluntary capacity, in a myriad of different Diocesan and parochial roles such as on Select Vestries, Diocesan Synod and their various Boards and Committees. **Without such faithful voluntary service, the life and mission of the Church would flounder.**

In this spirit of gratitude, the Commission is nonetheless mindful of the need to afford such committees the opportunity to review how they best function. Added to this is the need for adherence to current best practice for voluntary bodies as reflected in the Code of Governance prepared by the Charities Regulatory Authority.

To that end, the Commission recommends that all Diocesan and parochial committees periodically:

- Undertake an **evaluation** of the size and make-up of their Committee. Would an increase or decrease in participant numbers contribute to the efficient working of the Committee?
- Conduct an **audit of requisite skills** necessary for the good functioning of the Committee; and deliberately **endeavour to attract a wide and pertinent breadth of skilled volunteers** (induction should be provided for new members, with training where appropriate);
- Give consideration to the introduction of a **term limit for volunteers**, in line with the Irish Charities Governance Code (2018), which suggests a maximum term of nine years;
- Be mindful, in electing persons to vacancies, of the benefit of having a **wide range of participants**, and to that end giving consideration to the number of different roles being held by any one committee member;
- Undertake **succession planning**, so that retirements/recruitments do not undermine the fruitful operation of the committee.

6.4.3 Faith-Based Voluntary Organisations

Girls' Friendly Society (GFS), Boys' Brigade (BB), Mothers' Union (MU) & Sunday Schools

Faith-based voluntary organisations are an important part of faith-based parish life, at times crossing parish boundaries. The Commission commends the generosity and commitment of all those who work to sustain the presence of these organisations across our Diocese, especially those who act as leaders. It is important to encourage, support and build the morale of those who exercise leadership roles. Evidently, the support of faith-based organisations in the Diocese may garner rich rewards in developing our church community.

The Commission makes the following recommendations with respect to faith-based organisations:

- Parishes, Clergy and organisations who have not already developed associations are encouraged to **develop links**, to reduce any possible disconnect between these organisations and parish life.
- the **appointment of a Diocesan Youth/Children's Officer** would provide a valuable resource to the youth/children organisations.
- a **clear, accessible, and regularly updated listing of diocesan faith-based organisations and contact details**, be published and maintained on the Diocesan website.
- In like manner, the boundaries of faith-based organisations, where multiple parishes are involved, be clearly articulated in parish and printed literature.
- that the expectations of the parish clergy in connection with parish faith-based organisations, be clearly **defined in the preparation of a parish profile**.
- regular **feedback is given to the Select Vestry** on parish faith-based activities, to help to harmonise and support the growth of these organisations, bringing greater awareness of their mission in the community.

It is recognised that engagement with youth/children organisations provides a significant opportunity for Clergy to meet the youth/children of the parish.

Mothers' Union (MU):

It was noted that Mothers' Union appreciates and would welcome further clergy and parochial support. It was noted that falling church attendance among younger families was having an adverse effect on outreach within parishes.

Recommendations:

- MU to be **prayed for regularly** at services and to be asked occasionally to speak at family services
- **More support for advocacy campaigns** such as domestic violence and gender abuse including use of prayer resources offered by MU.
- **MU services to be part of normal Sunday morning services** (as happens for BB and GFS)
- **Further Parish and Clergy support would be welcomed and appreciated.**

6.5 DIOCESAN YOUTH/CHILDREN/SCHOOLS

6.5.1 Diocesan Youth/ Children's Ministry

It is recognised that the Bishop's Youth Advisory Committee (BYAC) at present is tasked with responsibility for the provision of youth ministry on a diocesan wide basis. The encouraging of youth activity within our parishes was a priority with all stakeholders. To develop and support the BYAC the following recommendations are made:

Governance

- The Committee should be **formalised by Council** and be a subcommittee of it with terms of reference developed by Diocesan Council
- Membership should contain Clergy and laity and some active young people
- The BYAC should have **control of its own finances** (subject to the usual governance)
- The youth grant received from the Church of Ireland Youth Council should go to the BYAC along with the grant given by the Diocese in order to give the group full autonomy.
- The allocation of grants to groups within the Diocese should be in the remit of the BYAC

Part of the BYAC terms of reference will be the **development of imaginative ways to promote more involvement for teens**, including:

- Events organised with more contemporary music where the gospel message is related in a manner and language that teens can relate to easily.
- Where there are examples of this working well, the learning should be shared through using the voices of young people.
- Energise youth participation through their interest in **social justice projects** and offer formal opportunities on designated projects locally, nationally and internationally (e.g., through the Bishop's Appeal).
- Highlight and **champion youth projects already taking place in the Diocese** to increase the visibility of young people and their Christian endeavours.

Youth/Children's Officer

- It is recommended that a Diocesan **Youth/Children's officer be appointed**. This represents an amalgamation of roles, which were heretofore separate, but are considered to be complementary. This would be a **paid, full-time position**.
- The appropriate candidate need not be ordained but should be familiar with the workings of a mainly rural diocese. Ideally, they should have some theological training and experience of dealing with young people
- Their work would entail supporting all the faith-based organisations within the Diocese which work with youth/children (e.g., BB, GFS, existing youth groups, and Sunday Schools), as well as supporting and resourcing clergy in their ministry to schools.

6.5.2 Diocesan Schools:

Whilst Church of Ireland schools are not answerable to Diocesan Synod and operate under the remit of the Department of Education, the Commission recognises the key role that such schools play in the life of the Church, as well as the unique potential that they contain. This is most especially the case as young families drift from our parishes.

It applauds all those who work to nurture and support the witness of the Church in school life.

Following submissions from schools across the Diocese, the Commission recommends that Diocesan Synod:

- **broaden the remit of the Diocesan Board of Education** to include supporting and resourcing the provision of religious education in schools;
- **resource, at a Diocesan level, the technological support of religious education**, to provide such facilities as a shared online platform for teachers; a central bank of online resources; and to facilitate webinars with guest speakers for teachers;
- **encourage the provision of fellowship amongst teachers** (initiatives such as the annual 'Ascension Day' gathering);
- include school ministry as a **specific task within the role** of Youth/Children's Officer, which would include, supporting local clergy with resources/training for school visits/leading school assemblies etc;
- provide for **ongoing training of clergy in school ministry** as part of any continuing-professional-development programme;
- petition General Synod to allocate resources to make the '*Follow Me*' programme available in an on-line version, that can be kept up-dated in a cost-effective manner;
- The Commission recognises that the advent of a university in the South-East provides an opportunity for a **joint bid for chaplaincy** between the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland and commends such an endeavor.

6.6 FINANCE

6.6.1 Parish Finance:

The Commission acknowledges the tremendous work undertaken by parish treasurers and all who work to ensure the financial wellbeing of parishes throughout the Diocese. Their role is complex as they work to combine the financial requirements involved in the wider context of the provision of

ministry and more local challenges particularly in relation to the upkeep of buildings and insurance requirements.

COVID posed an enormous challenge for parishes and their treasurers, affecting both regular giving through loss of Sunday collections due to church closure, and fundraising because of the inability to organise events. It was noted that many parishes countered this by developing direct debit and other online forms of giving. Treasurers also highlighted a worrying feature around the age profile of those contributing regularly to parish finances. This was skewed somewhat by the fact that some giving is intergenerational.

Support for Parish Treasurers:

- encourage **clear communication between the Parish Treasurer and all parishioners** on the financial needs of the parish and responsibilities to the Diocese and wider church;
- Select Vestry should be knowledgeable on the up-to-date parish financial situation and involved in the planning to meet current and future financial challenges;
- Select Vestry should have an understanding of the financial requirements involved in the maintenance of the individual parish in its present form;
- recognition of **increased responsibilities in relation to financial recording** and requirements by the **Charity Regulator**. Parish treasurers are urged to avail of the services of the Diocesan Liaison officer, in this regard;
- parishes should be encouraged to continue to explore/develop the use of technology to assist with Parish giving, such as a direct debit option;
- avail of support from the Diocesan team who are available to assist parish treasurers with queries and can facilitate meetings to explain financial aspects.

Parish:

- once it becomes clear to a Select Vestry that there may be difficulties in meeting financial obligations it is vital that it **engages promptly** with the Diocese, notifying the Diocesan Office/Finance Committee.

6.6.2 Diocesan Finance Committee:

It is recommended that

- the **terms of reference** for the Diocesan Finance Committee are **reviewed and updated** and that new members elected to the Finance committee are furnished with terms of reference when appointed.
- a **short, medium- and long-term financial plan** to move forward from reactive problem solving to proactive solution security is drawn up and reviewed annually.
- work is undertaken towards the **standardisation of Clergy band payments**, so that all Clergy payments are consistent and uniform within the Diocese.
- a **standardised rate of remuneration is set for allowances** that may arise for Clergy during a vacancy or sickness.
- a guideline/policy is agreed, outlining the steps to be followed when a parish begins to fall into arrears, or where a Select Vestry believes that the current financial situation is unsustainable. Steps covered will include:
 - when representatives of the Finance Committee meet and engage with parish clergy/treasurers/secretaries in order to identify the reasons, offer advice and

encouragement and put forward practical suggestions/options to the parish for them to consider;

- options that clearly explain the financial implications for the closure/sale of specific church buildings including what options there are to remain open;
- agreed reporting lines confirmed, with escalation points, where issues are referred promptly to Finance Committee and Diocesan Council for further consideration.

6.7 MISCELLANEOUS

6.7.1 Safeguarding Officer and Team

Safeguarding Trust is the policy of the Church of Ireland to set standards for the welfare of all children sharing in its ministry with a view to protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm. The Church of Ireland has adopted a Quality Assurance Framework and strives towards the highest standard in safeguarding with children and vulnerable adults. The two identified standards are **Protecting** and **Responding**. <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/safeguarding/roi-child-safeguarding>

In support of the successful operation of the Safeguarding Trust policy, the Commission recommends that:

- a **Diocesan Safeguarding Officer be appointed as soon as possible**, as a **part-time, paid position**. Preferably, this person should be a member of the laity with experience or training in this specific area, or a member of the diocesan administration team if resources were available.
- the Safeguarding Officer should be encouraged to set up a **panel (8-10), who would assist in the delivery of the training** and be able to assist with the Parish Audits. This panel would also act as a support to the Safeguarding Officer.

6.7.2 Conflict Resolution:

The *Dignity in Church Life Charter* was adopted by General Synod in 2015. This has given rise to the implementation of a procedure, available to all members of the Church of Ireland, for dealing promptly and fairly with all instances of bullying and harassment experienced within Church life.

Similarly, a policy and procedure has been developed for dealing with clergy grievances. The procedure maps a clear pathway for the making and consideration of grievances, with diocesan human resources being made available to support the process.

- It is recommended that Diocesan Synod request General Synod to inaugurate the preparation of a comparable, user-friendly policy and procedure for dealing with parochial complaints. (It is contended that the current procedure for dealing with such complaints pursuant to Chapter 8 of the Church of Ireland Constitution is both inaccessible and daunting for lay members of the Church and leaves lay members unsupported in the process).

6.7.3 Communications:

It is recommended that Diocesan communications becomes a fixed agenda item at each Diocesan Council meeting.

The work of the “Communications and Magazine Committee”(C&M), is commended by the Commission and a report to Diocesan Council should be sought from the Chairperson of this committee for each meeting.

It is recommended that a **Diocesan Communications Strategy (plan) is developed.**

Sustained, strong diocesan communications are vital for the way forward and it will become increasingly more important as time progresses. The communication strategy will outline the plan for communication to all required audiences within the Diocese. It is suggested that the strategy would be developed by the C&M Committee with input from the Diocesan Communications Officer and reviewed annually. The development of this strategy would further support the strengthening of understandings between our Parishes and the Diocese.

It is recommended that

- the **diocesan social media platforms are developed to engage with younger people. A focus discussion group** could be undertaken with this age group to support the development direction.
- **a review is carried out in relation to the equipment available** to the communication teams, as required investment could bring greater effectiveness and efficiencies.
- the educational and informative handbook **A Guide to Church Government** which originated from the work in 2011 of the Episcopal Review group, should be **updated and perhaps digitised**. It could then be circulated to current members of Diocesan Council and Diocesan Synod, new Clergy entering ministry in our Diocese and to new members on their election to Diocesan Council, Synod, and Select Vestries.

All Select Vestry members should familiarise themselves with the **RCB Parish Handbook** which is available in hard copy, and easily accessible on the website <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/> This manual supports Select Vestries, Parish officers and all members of the Church in the administration and organisation of parish life. It may be particularly helpful for Clergy to highlight that this information is available to new Select Vestry members or Parish officers.

It is recommended that parishes who do not already have efficient means of communicating with parishioners be encouraged to have some, or all, of the following:

- a group-text, WhatsApp structure for parishioners
- a weekly newsletter or email to parishioners
- a Facebook page.

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION

Synod is the owner of this Report and thus bears responsibility to ensure that the guidance contained within, does not gather dust, but rather that it gains momentum, to help to shape the future of faith within our Diocese.

The Report is the culmination of a strategic review of our parochial and diocesan life, which has explored strengths and weaknesses, and which now offers a way forward.

The methodology employed by the Commission from the very outset of its work, and in compliance with its Terms of Reference, involved a deliberate 'bottom-up' approach. Those across the Diocese who will be most affected by the implementation or otherwise of the Report's recommendations, were consulted and heard.

It is recognised that some will seek from this Report a detailed plan for the future configuration of parishes and organisation of ministry across the Diocese.

While such an approach has the seeming advantage of efficiency and concrete planning, such a 'top-down' formulation of plans risks losing the support and input of those who are at the 'coalface' in our parishes across the Diocese. Indeed, our Diocese has had experience of such in the past.

Accordingly, **it is recommended that the proposed work of implementation is undertaken at all times in a spirit of consultation and co-operation between those who lead, and those who participate in, the life of our Diocese.**

It is thus recommended that at the special meeting of the Diocesan Synod on Saturday 29th April 2023 consideration be given to the following motion:

"That this Synod:

- Receives the Report of the Diocesan Review Commission, 2023, entitled "Offering a Way Forward," under the following headings, with grateful thanks:
 - Vacancy Committees
 - Adult Faith Development
 - Worship
 - Sustainable Models of Ministry
 - Strengthening of Clergy Supports
 - Clergy Tenure
 - Appointment of Clergy
 - Development of Rural Deanery structure
 - Ordained Local Ministry
 - Diocesan Readers and Parish Readers
 - Diocesan Voluntary Committees
 - Faith-based Voluntary Organisations
 - Diocesan Youth/Children's Ministry
 - Diocesan Schools
 - Finance
 - Safeguarding
 - Conflict Resolution

- Communications
- Implementation
- Requests the Bishop, Diocesan Council, its sub-committees, the Boards of Education, and Diocesan Synod to consider the recommendations that fall under their respective remits;
- Establishes a Bishop's Advisory Group that will operate to support the Bishop, and to oversee the progression of the Report's findings.

The membership of the Bishop's Advisory Group shall be:

The Bishop or Bishop's Commissary (Chair)

The Archdeacons (ex officio)

Two Deans (elected from the Diocesan Synod)

Two Clergy (elected from the Diocesan Synod)

Six lay people (elected from the Diocesan Synod)

The Diocesan Secretary or assistant Diocesan secretary in attendance as secretary

The Bishop's Advisory Group shall report to Diocesan Council quarterly, and to Diocesan Synod annually.

The membership shall be elected for a triennium, and no member shall be elected for more than two consecutive terms. Vacancies will be filled by the next supplementalist where required."

8.0 APPENDIX-METHODOLOGY

8.1 Design

The design of the Diocesan Review was aligned to the remit and corresponding objectives set out by the Special Synod in 2019. An evidence-based framework by which the Commission could conduct the Review was agreed. This included details on the approach to be taken, the consultation methods and the different stakeholders who would be engaged in the Review process.

Information gathering took place in four stages:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Stage 1: | Questionnaire to serving clergy (stipendiary and non-stipendiary) (Phase 1) |
| | Questionnaire to retired clergy (Phase 2) |
| Stage 2: | Discussion groups with serving clergy (face-to-face) |
| Stage 3: | Discussion groups with various stakeholders (Zoom) |
| Stage 4: | Discussion groups with parishes (face-to-face) |

8.2 Methods

Four primary consultation methods were used throughout the Review to gather the views, experiences, insights and suggestions of stakeholders. These were a questionnaire, interviews, workshops, and discussion groups. Interviews and discussion groups took place online (in line with COVID restrictions) and in person when restrictions were lifted. Public health guidance was followed.

8.2.1 Clergy Questionnaire

The Phase 1 questionnaire for serving clergy was distributed in October 2019 which comprised of seven areas divided into thirty-seven sub-questions. These included:

- Deepening of faith and personal care
- Pastoral and liturgical ministry
- Ministry and outreach
- Vision
- Interpersonal and communication
- The Commission-Parish visits
- Clergy characteristics

Towards the end of 2019, the Clergy questionnaire was adapted to a shorter format with only five areas and fourteen sub-questions. The modified version was circulated to retired Clergy.

8.2.2 Clergy Workshops/Parish Meetings

An active learning tool was used to invite reflection and encourage solution sharing at the clergy workshops and parish meetings. The metaphor of a boat on water served as the conduit to explore the following questions (the Sailboat exercise):

- What was working well in their Ministry/parish (Wind in sails)
- What were their challenges (Anchor)?
- What were their hopes (Oasis)?
- What were their fears? (Rocks)

Working individually initially, participants wrote their responses on post-it notes and placed these under each of the visual metaphors (Figure 6). The facilitators in collaboration with the group merged notes together that had a similar response, and this framed the headline themes. Participants were then asked to vote for the top theme from each of the four areas. The top voted theme was then moved onto the next part where collaborative impactful solutions were brainstormed.

Following this, participants were asked individually to come up with solutions under each headline theme. The same reduction process was used to collapse similar solutions together. The solutions which received the most support were put forward to the final plotting stage.

The third and final stage of the workshop invited clergy/parishioners to plot the preferred solutions in terms of impact (x axis) against effort (y axis). These were referred to as:

- ‘Quick wins’;
- ‘Major projects’;
- ‘Leave for now’; or
- ‘Ideas bank’.

A feedback sheet was created to record and collate the responses from each part of the workshop which was referred to as the Action Board (Figure 7).

These were used in all of the clergy workshops/parish meetings to standardise data collection and reporting.

The workshops for clergy were arranged through the four rural deanery groups, followed by two final meetings held to accommodate those who could not attend on the night of their rural deanery meeting.

Figure 6: Active learning tool for group discussions

The Sailboat Exercise

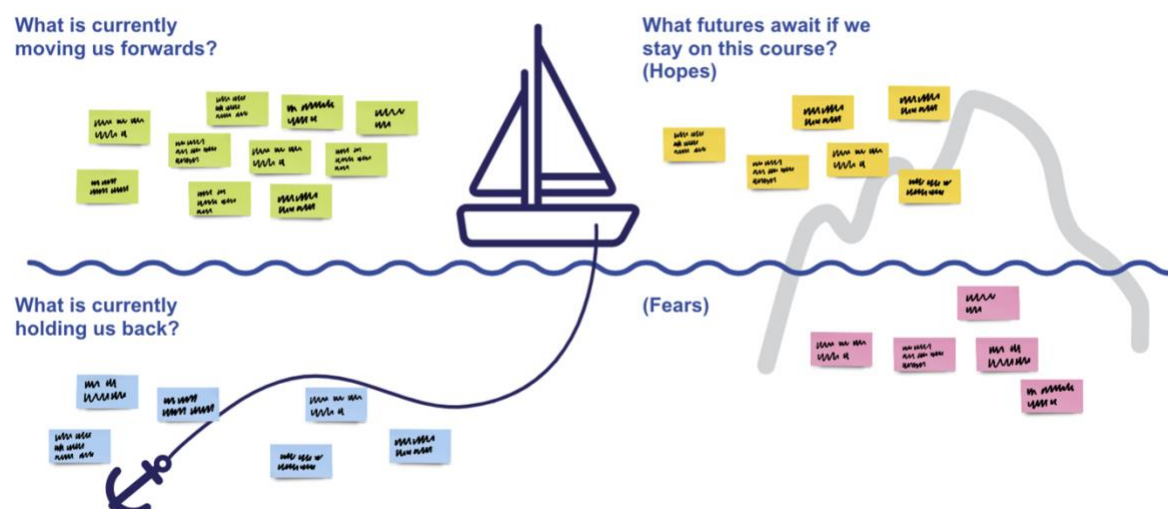


Figure 7: Action Board Template



8.2.3 Church of Ireland Schools

The Bishop as Patron of the Diocesan Church of Ireland Primary schools and one secondary school in CFO Diocese was interviewed and asked questions in relation to the following:

- How is the ethos of the Church of Ireland school known and understood both within schools and across the Diocese?
- In a time of decreasing Christian literacy, how well are our schools being supported in nurturing a basic knowledge of God, such as might ground Christian faith?
- What practical supports exist for teachers in diocesan schools to help them in this task? Might these supports be improved? If so, how?

Letters were written to all Church of Ireland primary and one secondary school within the Diocese. School principals were invited to share with the Commission under three headings, namely: (i) What

we do in our school around faith promotion; (ii) The current active links between parish and school; and (iii) Suggestions as to how the Diocese could help to further develop faith in schools.

8.3 Stakeholders

This was a multi-stakeholder consultation which was Diocesan wide to offer equal opportunities to all Church of Ireland members to reflect, contribute and provide feedback on the current position of the Diocese. These contributions have informed the Commission's recommendations and proposed action plan for Diocesan planning and innovation going forward.

Stakeholders who took part in the Review were:

- Archdeacons
- Serving Clergy
- Retired Clergy
- Parishioners
- Diocesan/parish Readers
- Diocesan Finance Committee
- Diocesan Mothers Union Representatives
- Diocesan Communication Team/Committee
- Diocesan Youth Committee (BYAC)
- Patron of Diocesan Primary/Secondary Schools
- Diocesan Board of Patronage -Diocesan Nominators and Parochial Nominators
- Children's Ministry
- Girls' Friendly Society
- Diocesan Youth
- Boys' Brigade

8.4 Financial Returns

All parishes were asked to furnish information in relation to direct giving in the parish. This was disaggregated by age group. These returns were inspected and analysed for inclusion in the report.

8.5 Sample

The first objective of the Commission was *'to consult with all parochial unions and groups across the Diocese, in order to identify current and prospective needs and patterns of ministry for the future'*. This involved the identification of all relevant stakeholders who have a role to play in Diocesan life whether active or passive. Table 12 details the proportion of engagement from each stakeholder group to indicate the level of representation in the Review. The sample size is calculated on the number of individuals or groups who were invited to engage in the process against the number who participated. It should be noted that this a discrete population from which sample sizes are estimated (i.e., members of the Church of Ireland within the CFO Diocese).

The statistically reliable sample size was calculated for parishes using the 2022 Church of Ireland census. Based on these figures the number of participants required to take part in the Commission consultation is 364 (95% Confidence level). This was exceeded by 215 parishioners.

Sample size has not been recorded for groups who have been selected to be part of a specific group or organisation, e.g., Diocesan Financial Committee, Diocesan Readers, Mothers' Union representatives. The total number of participants at these meetings have been noted to indicate the overall level of contributions to the Commission.

Table 12: Sample size of stakeholder groups

Stakeholder	Number distributed/invited	Response/ participation rate
Clergy questionnaire	32	65%
Retired clergy questionnaire	23	43%
Clergy workshops/meetings	37	78%
Primary schools	26	38%
Secondary school	1	100%
Committees and other Church stakeholders	66	100%
Parishes	Statistical sample required for 2022 Church of Ireland population census: 364	580

8.6 Analysis

All responses gathered by the Commission were received and anonymised at the point of data entry. In order to robustly manage the voluminous nature of the number of consultations (n=706), the Framework Method (a form of thematic or content analysis) was employed to guide the systematic identification of commonalities and differences in the information retrieved. This offered the possibility of assessing the relationships between qualitative data and contributed to themes being highlighted. Given the use of structured consultation method in this Review, the Framework Method was selected as the analytical tool of choice.

Using the steps of the Framework Method, transcripts of responses for each individual interview/survey response were subject to the coding, thematic development, application of framework structure and charting of data to facilitate an objective interpretation of views presented in the research process. For the purposes of reporting, each participant group as identified in the methodology will be presented separately.

Eleven analytical themes (codes) that emerged following the charting of data within a detailed matrix which mapped individual responses to thematic pillars. Cumulative totals of codes were counted and grouped to form an overarching theme. The strength of the themes was dictated by the frequency of their occurrence in the transcripts and dominance as leading areas put forward by participants.

Application of the Framework Method to the Commission data involved the following stages:

1. Transcription
2. Familiarisation with interviews/consultations
3. Coding

4. Development of a working analytical framework
5. Applying the analytical framework
6. Charting data into the framework matrix
7. Interpreting the data

The process of refining, applying, and refining the analytical framework was repeated until no new codes were generated.

THE THIRD COLLECT OF MORNING PRAYER

From the *Book of Common Prayer*

*Go before us, Lord, in all our doings,
With your most gracious favour,
and further us with your continual help;
that in all our works begun, continued and ended in you,
we may glorify your holy name,
and finally, by your mercy attain everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*