

## **“Looking to the Future Whilst Being Faithful to the Past”**

*‘Together we seek a new spirit of evangelisation to create vibrant, faith-filled communities where Christ’s presence is celebrated. We seek a renewal of priestly and lay ministry. We seek a more collaborative experience of ministry. In fidelity to those who have gone before us we seek a new Pentecost for the Church in the Archdiocese of Glasgow.’ (Archbishop Nolan).*

Early in 2023, Archbishop Nolan commissioned representatives (priest and lay-person from every parish) from across the archdiocese to consider how we build and sustain those vibrant, faith-filled communities in a future where numbers of priests and sizes of congregations are reducing.

The archdiocesan deaneries were reorganised into a smaller number, with each deanery asked to organise itself into Pastoral areas. Our own deanery, named for St. Columba of Iona, was firstly shaped into 5 pastoral areas. With changes this Summer, that has been revised to 3 comprising:

- Area 1: Clydebank
- Area 2: Dumbarton
- Area 3: Argyll (Helensburgh, Rosneath and Arrochar) and Vale of Leven.

Each deanery was asked to consider a number of questions, making recommendations to the Archbishop at two stages in this consultation process. The questions were:

1. *Evangelisation: How can each deanery best evangelise in this current time bringing renewal to parish life?*
2. *Collaboration: How can deanery parishes work together in new ways to support each other?*
3. *Resources: What resources of people, finance and buildings does your deanery need to best serve these plans for evangelisation and collaboration?*

Within this, deaneries were specifically asked to consider how best to provide ministry in their area in the light of an ongoing reduction in the number of priests. This was to include consideration of possible reductions in the number of masses being offered; one priest having multiple parishes to serve; priests within pastoral areas being able to provide cover for one another in cases of holidays or sickness; the role of lay leadership and participation.

As a result of this consultation, a broad plan has emerged identifying those parishes which will provide the long-term foundation or ‘hub’ for an area and those parishes which may, over the next decade, need to close. The pain and upset this will cause is not under-estimated and so our focus as we navigate this path is on evangelisation, ministry and collaboration.

Here in Argyll we are blessed to have Fr. Greg Zungdet to minister to us. However, he is doing so in place of 2 priests and, like his predecessors, has wider responsibilities (e.g. to our Catholic schools) to manage alongside his parish ministry. The need for a collaborative ministry, for us to share our talents and time, has never been more important. It is only together in faith that we will build vibrant communities and experience that new Pentecost.

*We will continue to share more on future changes and opportunities. In the meantime, we ask for your prayers and for you to consider the role you can play in building our community.*