

Dear all

As part of the Pastoral Plan (Advent 2021) (the document issued following the Archdiocese of Liverpool’s Synod 2020), Archbishop Malcolm determined that for him to carry out his role he needed to discern what the Spirit was saying to the Church by listening to the people of God, our faithful community.

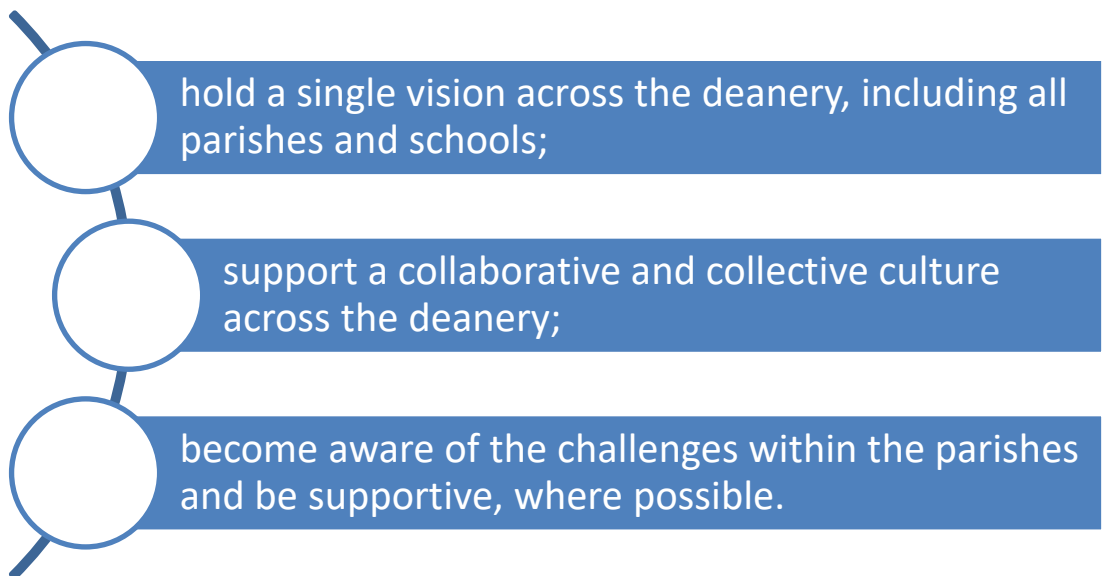
To assist in the achievement of this listening, a council was established for each new deanery (a deanery synodal council or DSC). Our DSC, the Sefton North Coast Deanery Council, was established in July 2022, and I was appointed by the Archbishop to serve as its chair.

Challenges of the DSC

The DSCs were charged by the Archbishop to:

- connect people across the deanery, sharing experience, talent and opportunities for growth;
- offer mutual support and prayerful discernment, particularly on specific areas; and
- offer the parishes of the deanery support to experience a wider vision of the Church.

In order to achieve these aims, each DSC was asked to:



The word “synodal” used in the name of the DSCs is given the meaning of **respectful listening, discernment** and

implementation. The concept of synodality is fundamental to the way that the DSCs must operate and this will mean that our DSC will engage with all in the deanery, try to understand and appreciate all that it receives and be sensitive and aware in the implementation of its aims.

Progress of our DSC

The membership of the DSC is not as representative as we would like and we urge anyone who considers that they would like to be a member to approach their parish priest or me.

The members that we do have were put forward by their parish priests and are all committed and have worked hard not only to form the DSC but to create a robust platform to take on the tasks delegated to it. But, help is always gratefully received either to the DSC itself, or to its Missions (see below), so please reach out if prepared to help.

There has been much prayer and consideration within our DSC with time taken to get to know each other, understand the purpose for which it was established, and to allow there to be a reflection on how best to support the existing structure of parishes and the deanery. Most importantly, the DSC has been considering how best to support all within the deanery. There were many priorities considered but the key priorities initially agreed were:

1. to support the parishes within the deanery and to bring them closer together in their common aims and missions;
2. to establish and implement three initial missions across the deanery:

Mission for Youth

Mission for Charity

Mission for Adult Faith Formation

3. to provide a platform for the parish priests to engage with all within the deanery, consult and to implement the three initial missions and any further missions;
4. to have a clear communication strategy to allow for information to be passed to all within the deanery and a process for

listening and discernment back to the DSC, the parish priests and ultimately the Archbishop; and

5. to celebrate the individuality and values of each of the parishes, but allowing support and knowledge of them throughout the deanery.

The DSC recognises that to be synodal it is absolutely key to engage with all within the deanery on all that it is doing, and all that concerns the deanery going forward. This letter is the start of that engagement and we look forward to a full communication process going forward.

Family of parishes

The initial focus of the work of the DSC as set by the Archbishop was to explore the resources of a deanery that will lead to the establishment of Family of Parishes. This reflects the priorities set out in the Pastoral Plan.

While there has been some discussion in relation to the Family of Parishes in the DSC, we have not started our engagement with the deanery and this will start very shortly. Consultation with the priests of the deanery has already commenced and that consultation will now extend to each parish. This consultation will take place in November and December.

Conclusion

I hope that this communication gives some idea of the purpose of the DSC, the tasks that it has been asked to do and how the DSC is challenged to carry out those tasks. I realise that there may be some confusion about the DSC and how it fits in with the overall governance of the Church, and so I have set out brief background notes attached.

Communication is going to be a big part of the way the DSC works going forward, so all ideas and contributions will be gratefully received as to how we do this successfully. Please do contact us for further information or with your comments at [email].

Many thanks for taking the time to read this communication and please look out for future communications on the Family of Parishes consultation and from each of the Missions which have been prioritised by the DSC.

SEFTON COAST NORTH DEANERY SYNODAL COUNCIL

Kind regards,

BRIEF BACKGROUND NOTES

A PARISH	<p>The key structural support in the Church is the parish. The pastoral authority of the parish is dedicated to a priest, who represents the bishop or archbishop in the parish. The parish priest remains the key and lawful minister of faith through sacramental and pastoral ministry to the parish community.</p> <p>The importance of our parishes remains key in their identity, their missions and the support they provide to those within them. This will remain a key structure within the Church.</p>
A DEANERY	<p>Without detracting from the importance of parishes, bishops and archbishops can split their dioceses and archdioceses into deaneries, which are smaller geographical areas of governance. Within a deanery, parishes are grouped together under the care of a dean.</p> <p>A deanery is a grouping of nearby parishes, all of which remain the responsibility of the parish priest but under the deanery are pulled together to help each other and the communities that worship within them.</p>
FAMILY OF PARISHES	<p>Groups of parishes sharing resources to advance the mission, including having multiple priests, deacons and lay people. The model allows all associated with each parish to share their gifts and talents better with the whole of the Family of Parishes. The model includes one “mother church” with one or more “daughter churches”, one place for social gatherings, catechetical events and one parish office.</p>
OUR DEANERY	<p>In advent 2021, the Archbishop established new deaneries under the Archdiocese of Liverpool and there are now 13 deaneries. Our deanery is the Sefton Coast North Deanery and includes the parishes of:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Holy Family and Our Lady of Victories, Hightown/Ince Blundell</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Our Lady of Compassion, Formby</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">St John Stone/Sacred Heart, Ainsdale</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">St Maries, Southport</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">St Patrick’s, Southport</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Holy Family, Southport</p>

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	<p>St Teresa of Avila, Southport</p> <p>Our Lady of Lourdes and St Joseph, Southport</p>
OUR DEAN	A new dean was appointed in 2022 and this is Monsignor John Walsh, the parish priest of Our Lady of Compassion, Formby.
OUR DSC	The Sefton Coast North Deanery Synodal Council was established in the summer of 2022, with the first meetings taking place towards the end of that year.
MEMBERSHIP OF THE DSC	<p>The membership of each DSC should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one lay representative of each parish; • a schools' representative; and • three clergy from the deanery, at least two of whom will be priests <p>(with other representatives at the discretion of the dean and the chair).</p>
MEMBERS OF OUR DSC	<p>The current members of our DSC are:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"> Monsignor John Walsh (Dean) Father Paul Seddon (formally Father Tony Slingo) (St John Stone and Sacred Heart, Ainsdale) Father John Heneghan (St Marie's and Patrick's, Southport) John Sullivan (St John Stone and Sacred Heart, Ainsdale) Bruce Soden (St Marie's, Southport) John Moffat (Holy Family, Southport) Rosanne Mason (St John Stone and Sacred Heart, Ainsdale) Pauline Collier (St John Stone and Sacred Heart, Ainsdale) Louise Newton Ben Miller (Chair) (Our Lady of Compassion, Formby) </p>