

## **DEANERY OF EASTBOURNE & ST LEONARDS-on-SEA**

**Battle, Bexhill-on-Sea, Eastbourne, Eastbourne (Langney & Hampden Park), Hailsham & Polegate, Hastings, Rye, St Leonards-on-Sea**

### **LETTER TO ALL PARISHIONERS – UPDATE ON THE NEW PARISH**

In November we had 2 very important and fruitful meetings of the Deanery clergy (priests and deacons), firstly with the Diocesan Team dedicated to overseeing the practical process of joining up our parishes, then a week later a meeting with Bishop Richard. These really helped us understand how we need to work together in a new way as a Clergy Team, working closely with parishioners from across our new large parish.

#### **Many of you, along with us clergy, have been wondering what's going to happen and when?**

The answer is that from January we will begin forming a **leadership structure of clergy and laity**, with representation from across our 15 church communities, who will work together to begin putting in place a concrete **Parish Pastoral Plan**, based on the Diocesan Plan with focus always on Prayer, Formation and Mission. Our Parish Plan will have clear actions and timelines to begin reorganising how we can work closely together, sharing all our best human and material resources. We will make sure that this is all communicated across the parish and give opportunity for people to participate in making the Plan concrete and the best it can be for us all. We will not be rushing to make big changes too soon but will concentrate on getting all of you who work in important church ministries to start meeting and sharing your expertise and experience. Quite quickly though we will need to audit our **Mass schedules** so that, working in our 2 Hubs ("Eastbourne" and "St Leonard's/Hastings"), we create a more realistic Mass schedule across the churches that can be managed by a smaller number of priests. This will mean people being more flexible in when and where they go to Mass. Every church community will be supported to continue as a place of worship, but just needing to be open to flexibility in how and when we provide worship. The other important work we will be undertaking thoroughly in the initial weeks of the new year will be **auditing who does what and how things work** in each of our church communities – this will allow us to start communicating and working effectively across the large "community of communities" that we will be.

This process is happening across the 11 Deaneries of the Diocese – so in the months ahead we will end up as a Diocese of 11 new large parishes. **The moment that our Deanery formally and legally is constituted as a single new Parish will be some months from now**; the Bishop has indicated this will probably be around June. This gives us time to get a lot of the basic new foundations in place, especially working relationships across our many church communities. Priests will substantially continue living where they are, having a particular relationship of care and pastoral oversight to the people who already know them. But little by little we will all experience being part of something larger, with all the good new opportunities that will create. When we are officially constituted as a new Parish, we will need to take on a new Parish name, something you will be invited to share your thoughts on in due course!

From January there will be more regular updates on this journey we will be making together. Please be ready and open to being involved, helping and above all praying for the Holy Spirit to guide our every step!

Wishing you all a Peaceful and Holy Christmas

*Fr Kevin* (Moderator of the Clergy Team)