



# “Stewards of the Gospel”

## What Are “Stewards of the Gospel”?

The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

Next year, 2017, our diocese will mark its 100th anniversary. We have a shared story, which we will be retelling in various ways as part of the celebrations. And like the people of God who have gone before us, we can't stay still! Society and the world around us has changed; we have changed. Ageing clergy, immigration which has altered the demographics of the Diocese and buildings in need of repair are just some of the forces for change which demand an urgent response. The Gospel story stays the same but where and how we retell it brings new and exciting challenges.

The Diocesan Strategic Planning Group (DSPG) was formed last year to begin to address this. The group is comprised of Bishop Alan Williams, Mgr Kevin Hale VG, Fr Andrew Headon, Fr Dominic Howarth, Fr Tom Saunders, Fr Stephen Myers, Mrs Mary Huntington, Mrs Anne-Marie Conway, Mr Jim Barron, Mrs Pat Barron, Mr Damian Walsh and Mr Tim Campbell.

The DSPG would like now to encourage the appointment of “Stewards of the Gospel”, an individual in each parish, who together with parishioners and local clergy, will assess the resources available, in the parish and locally, to maximise the opportunities for evangelisation and sacramental provision. The Stewards would volunteer their time and their talents to work closely with the clergy, parishes and schools as part of the diocesan planning process. Comprehensive training and support will be provided to help the Stewards prepare for their important role in their parishes. And it will not be an easy one. After the discernment stage of the process, the role will involve accompanying people through change and transition, helping to implement the chosen initiatives and make them a reality.

A Steward will be appointed in each parish. He or she will encourage discussion and be an advocate for their fellow parishioners, communicating their ideas, thoughts and concerns to the Diocesan Strategic Planning Group.

## Why Is The Role Important?

The Stewards will be part of the collaboration between clergy and laity in shaping the future of the Diocese. This is an exciting opportunity to play a key role within the Diocese - planning, preparing the Church for the future and ensuring evangelisation, ministry and sacramental provision for years to come.



## What Will It Involve?

### Stewards will:

- Form a parish consultation group with the support of the Parish Priest
- Assess the resources of the parish in association with the consultation group and clergy
- Liaise with the DSPG on the outcomes of the parish group meetings
- Communicate regularly with the Parish Priest
- Attend (initially 6) meetings with other Diocesan Stewards for formation and training
- Attend regular meetings with fellow deanery Stewards and the Clergy Deanery Conference

## What is the time commitment?

- The appointment will last for 2 years in the first instance
- A regular (monthly) meeting with your Parish Priest
- 6 x monthly formation meetings on a Saturday in Brentwood (10 am - 4 pm)
- From September 2016, monthly meetings in your parish
- From 2017, regular meetings with neighbouring Stewards; then monthly meetings of combined local parish consultation groups

## Who Should Volunteer?

### Faith Criteria

- Practising Catholics
- Known to the Parish Priest and having his confidence
- Known to the parish as someone who is trusted and respected
- Has a good understanding of parish life and of priestly ministry

### Personal Criteria

- Acts as a positive role model – resourceful, energetic and enthusiastic about the initiative
- Works effectively with others, building and maintaining excellent working relationships
- Is a strong communicator with experience of networking and conflict resolution
- Approaches issues with a “can-do” attitude
- Has experience of working with a wide range of people
- Has the availability to attend meetings and “formation” sessions as required
- Has access to IT and the internet

### Knowledge Criteria

- Good knowledge of the local area and the issues affecting it (other parishes in the deanery, schools, hospitals, prisons etc)
- Has previously produced and delivered presentations to large groups
- Has experience of facilitating team meetings
- Has successfully supported change agendas (in a work or voluntary setting)
- Recognises the issues associated with change and has worked to support individuals through it
- Good IT skills including MSWord & Msexcel (or the equivalent), e-mail and social media

## How Do I Get Involved?

- The Diocese is keen to hear from anyone in the community who meets most or all of these criteria. Please speak to your Parish Priest, expressing your interest in applying.
- Everyone is invited to pray the planning prayer for discernment: discernment in choosing the Stewards; and discernment that the Lord will show us the path ahead.