

Appendix 4: Principles for change

Principles as we go forward in planning:

1. Mission first, structures second

Everything we do should begin with the question: “Does this help people encounter Jesus and grow as disciples?” Then, “Do our buildings strengthen or weaken that Mission?”

2. Honest discernment of our reality

We face where we truly are, having fewer priests, fewer people, fewer resources. We discern with clarity and without fear: what is working? What is not? What might God be asking us to let go of?

3. People centred, we are a Church of relationships and accompaniment

Structures cannot replace relationships. We consider not just what to do but how to make changes.

4. Walking together in co-responsibility; listening to one another, living out our God-given vocations as a synodal Church

The parish is the *whole people of God*. Priests do what only priests can do; the laity do what the laity can do, together we serve. We invest in deacons, catechists, lay leadership, religious, volunteers and we allow ministry to be shared. We make decisions in collaboration with one another.

5. We build from current strengths (“Beacons of Mission”)

Instead of trying to start everything everywhere, we identify: the communities, ministries, prayer groups, schools, outreach efforts where the Spirit is already at work. We strengthen these, learn from them, and let them illuminate the wider area.

6. Stewardship with courage and compassion

We make decisions that are painful but necessary. We honour grief around loss, yet we recognise that letting go makes space for new life. We ask: what will sustain Mission for the next generation?

7. Care for clergy and lay leaders

Priests, deacons, religious, and lay leaders must not be overwhelmed. We prioritise healthy workloads, rest, support, and shared ministry. A flourishing community depends on flourishing leaders.

8. A posture of hope, not survival

We resist the temptation to “hold on until it passes.” Instead, we trust the Spirit’s work in a smaller, humbler Church. We look for signs of life, seeds of renewal, and moments of encounter.

9. Discernment as a way of proceeding

We actively plan for the future within our parish communities, attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. We see discernment not as a one-off exercise, but as a consistent habit: Pray-Listen-Reflect-Decide-Review. This rhythm keeps us attentive to the Spirit rather than locked into rigid plans or avoiding facing the future.

10. Always outward-looking

We ask in every area: how does this reach beyond the parish to those who do not yet know Christ? A missionary parish thinks neighbourhood, schools, families, the poor, those who have drifted away, those seeking meaning.