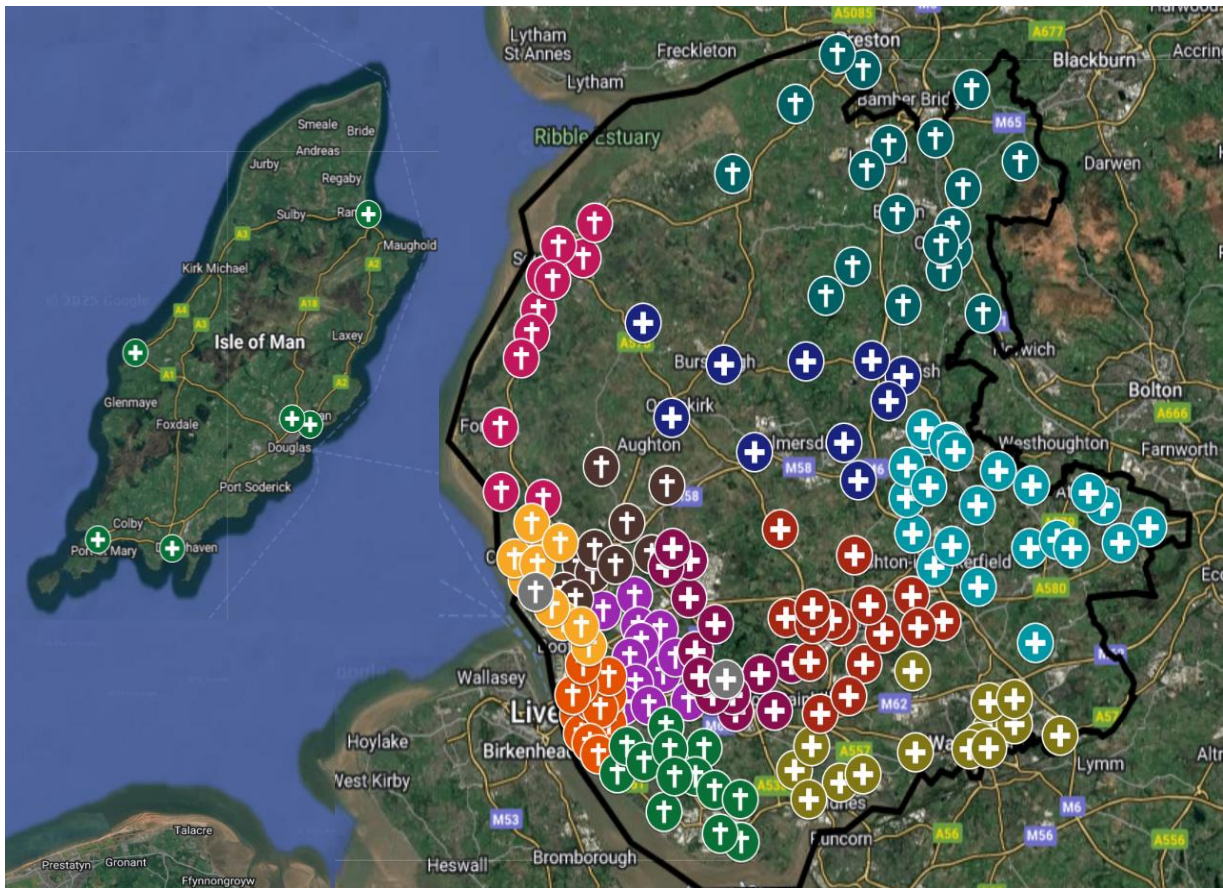




Archdiocese of Liverpool

Archdiocesan Synodal Council 2025

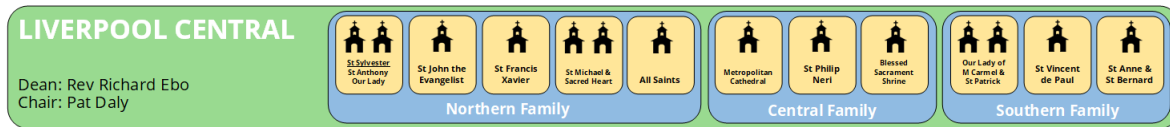
Deanery Reports



Journeying together in faith and service



Liverpool Central: 9 parishes, 1 Cathedral, 11 churches, 1 University Church, 1 Shrine, 18 priests (8 religious), 5 deacons



Since the last ASC we feel that we are growing as a group and are more willing to share ideas and voice opinions than we originally were. We have undertaken several projects aimed at accompanying our parishioners in prayer for situations that they feel needs extra help, e.g. we organised Masses around the Deanery to pray for people in Ukraine, Gaza and every war-torn country. After the Mass, refreshments were shared, and people were welcomed. The congregations grew as we went from parish to parish. We have also been affirming our Catechists as well as bringing people together to meet and learn from each other. One of highlights was the Reflection Day for Adult Readers. This was very well attended and everyone enjoyed the experience.

We are working on better communication between parishes, but it is difficult when some parishes are resistant to the Synod process, however we do have good communication between FOPs. We have no sight of anything connected with buildings and finance. We are told someone else is dealing with it. We are hoping to produce a Deanery Bulletin that can be shared among the parishes to let them see what we are doing and invite them to come and help. The new Chairs Meetings helps for communication between DSC's and when we are able to share information online then that will be very helpful.

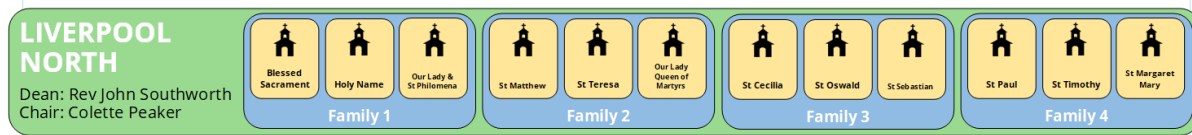
We have found engaging with Youth and Young adults difficult as our parishes either have few young people or the young people don't feel they know enough about Synod to be able to participate. We are making tentative steps to help with this. We have organised a Reflection Day for Young Readers and from the numbers being sent to us, we hope to be able to explain the role of Synod and possibly recruit some of their voices into our meetings.

We still have parishes that are resistant to the Synod process. The Parish Priests have asked for us to go and talk to the parishioners to allay fears that Synod is all about closing churches. This should have been done earlier but we underestimated the scale of the situation. Efforts are now underway to talk directly to the people and hopefully get them more involved than at present.

Clergy support is being supplied directly to them via priests from the archdiocese. As a synod council are aware of how hard our Parish Priests work and we are always willing to help if requested.

We are becoming more aware of what strategies must be put in place to enable action however, we are seriously low on members in some of our FOP's to be able to implement anything. We are working on recruitment.

Liverpool North: 12 parishes, 12 churches, 9 priests, 9 deacons



A report of all that had been done since the beginning of the North Liverpool DSC in December 2022:

1. We have learned how to pray together and listen attentively to one another
2. We have agreed our purpose
3. We have studied and understood the Pastoral Plan and the six areas of development
4. We have gathered information, in detail, on our parishes and using this, prayerfully discerned and agreed our Family of Parishes. (Finance, Buildings, Baptisms, Mass attendance etc.)
5. We have carried out an audit of each parish activities using a check list of what should be present in a vibrant parish community which is accompanying individual faith development and is outward looking to our local and wider world community (Tick sheet)
6. We have compiled information from this to gain a Deanery/Family of Parishes audit (Tick sheet)
7. We have recognised that there are two distinct and related elements in the Pastoral Plan - Spiritual renewal and Structural reform
8. We recognise that this is a long-term process of reform and renewal
9. We have begun the process of implementation, by identifying strengths and obstacles and using the lens of what has to be done (WHTBD), by whom and by when to begin to identify a way forward in each Family.
10. We have communicated with parish communities by direct talks and displays and issued our first Newsletter.

Looking to the future

We have also thought about some issues that will be relevant looking to the future:

- New Archbishop
- New Pope, Pope Francis had initiated a three-year programme of accompaniment and implementation (Letter signed by Francis) from Cardinal Grech – March 11th this year). All bishops must establish a synodal council
- We have identified the need to begin the process of a deeper involvement with Priests and Parishioners, joining them into our thinking.
- We need to look at ways to widen active participation in this process and work with our Parishes

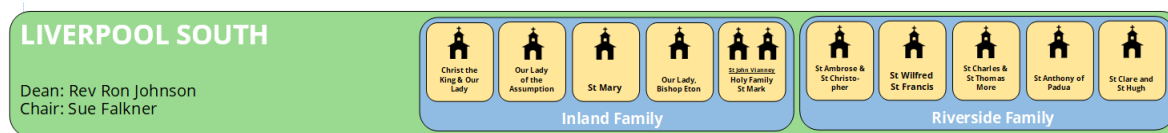
Develop succession planning

We always remember our central purpose, through prayerful listening to the Spirit, and role as holders at this time of the vision of a new way of becoming and being Church. *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit that will last...."(John 15:16)*

"Glory be to Him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine"

Our priority for the future is to ensure the active engagement of all our Parishes and clergy in the activities of the Families of Parishes.

Liverpool South: 10 parishes, 11 churches, 13 priests (5 religious), 5 deacons



Liverpool South Deanery consists of two FOP's, the Inland Family and the Riverside Family, both consisting of five parish churches. Up until this point we have had simultaneous events, although on different days, in each Family utilising every church. These have included a Pilgrimage of Hope and a Lenten journey of the Stations of the Cross. What has pleased us is that even though the Families have designated Parishes there are still people "mixing and matching" with both of our families to suit their preferred times and location. This bodes well for our future Deanery initiative celebrating the feast of St John Almond in December.

Our biggest challenge to date, and continues to be, is communication!

We are yet to discover a way of ensuring our invitation to FOP events is cascaded effectively and in a timely manner. We have a few strategies that we will work on to improve information sharing, one of which is to produce a newsletter for distribution to all parishioners in the Deanery.

We continue to be positive and determined that eventually we will meet the needs of our Parishes so that we no longer have to persuade people to be included, they will see it both as a pleasure and source of strength and support for us all, so that joining in feels the right thing to do.

The DSC remains upbeat and inspired. Over the next twelve months, working closely with the clergy, we hope to consolidate effective sharing of skills, good practice and resources in the very many Ministries that happen across our Parishes so that workloads of the wonderful committed volunteers is less arduous and more rewarding and smaller groups will be able to work together enriching the experience for all involved.

Isle of Man: 5 parishes, 6 churches, 3 priests, 2 deacons



Since the Archdiocesan Synodal Council (ASC) in November 2024, we report the following:

As Chair, I would like to place on record our sincere gratitude to our parish priest and Dean, Fr John Devine, for his leadership and pastoral care for the past 10 years. He has led us through the difficult covid years with great vision and challenged us in our faith journey through a welcoming and non-judgemental church rooted in the reality of our own lives. He enthusiastically steered the Synod process since the first all-island meeting in 2018. One of his goals when he came to the island was to bring the wider archdiocese to the parishioners of the Island as well as ensuring the archdiocese considers the impact of their decision making on Isle of Man parishioners. We wish him a well-deserved happy and fulfilling retirement.

Although the Isle of Man Deanery now feels more connected to the other Liverpool deaneries, there remains the unique situation that there are no Catholic Secondary schools on the island and only one Catholic Primary school.

Youth/Young Adults: Our question which was submitted to the ASC for Saturday 9 November was 'Given the absence of Catholic Secondary schools on the Island, the Isle of Man Deanery Synodal Council welcomes offers of support by Archdiocesan officers in developing a strategy of engaging with young people on the Island.' Fr John Devine had already discussed this subject with Canon Mike Fitzsimons, Episcopal Vicar for Education, and received further feedback from interested parties when the question was aired at the ASC.

We were delighted to read this month that a new Archdiocesan Youth Ministry Coordinator, Sarah McGeehan, had been appointed. We look forward to meeting and supporting Sarah in her role to build a network for our island youth.

In July some of our young people travelled to Lourdes as part of the Archdiocesan pilgrimage. Members spoke at all our weekend Masses of their experiences and the personal and spiritual growth they undergo during the pilgrimage.

Our Youth need to be heard. They can teach us in the big problems we face today. Pope Leo talked this week of the importance of integrating issues that affect younger generations into parish life such as social justice, peace, migration, care of creation, mental health and addiction.

Jubilee Year 2025 has been marked with several events which allowed an opportunity for our Families of Parishes to gather from across the island. In March a Jubilee Year Lenten Service of the Cross was held in the Cathedral Church of St Mary of the Isle. Those attending gathered around the Mission Cross. Archbishop Malcolm visited in April which was to be his last visit as Archbishop of Liverpool. Our own retired Manx priest Fr Brian Dougherty died in May. Bishop Tom Williams officiated. Parishioners and friends from across the island attended. The Installation of our new Archbishop John in the Cathedral Church of St Mary of the Isle in June was a happy occasion. Parishioners from each Catholic church participated as well as Government leaders, civic officers and ecumenical guests. This was followed by a reception for people to meet and talk. In August the annual open-air Mass of Our Lady of Rushen (Isle of Man feast) took place at Rushen Abbey in the south. People from across the island are invited to attend.

On 8 May 2025 Chris Higgins kindly attended our Deanery Synodal Council meeting. This was the same day as the election of Pope Leo so it was a memorable visit and talk from Chris.

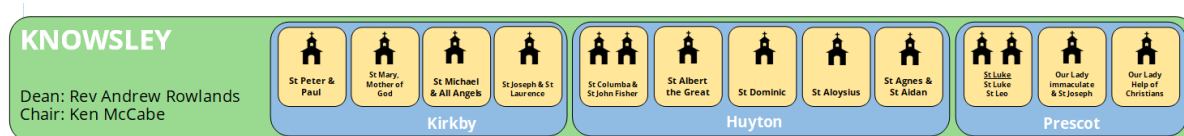
Accompaniment and Engagement – For the past 8 years Fr John has held an annual Novena to Mary, Untier of Knots. As well as services for our sick, housebound and bereaved the novena covered several challenging topics such as domestic abuse, coercion, climate change, social injustice and wars, suicide and depression, discrimination, refugees & asylum seekers, loss and failure, addiction and homelessness. Large numbers attended and there was an unspoken solidarity demonstrating that the church can reach out to people on the margins of society and engage with them.

Our esteemed DSC member Angela Main Thompson died in May 2025 after a short illness. Angela, a member from the South parish, always made valuable and insightful contributions to our meetings

and was a great observer of parish life. She was forthright on the absence of young people and what the future church might look like. She will be greatly missed.

We take this opportunity to welcome our new parish priest Canon Philip Gillespie and wish him every blessing as he begins his ministry in our parishes.

Knowsley: 12 parishes, 14 churches, 9 priests (1 religious), 5 deacons



A major highlight of the DSC was the Deanery Mass for the Sick, celebrated in June 2024 at All Saints Catholic High School, Kirkby. This gathering fostered a strong sense of community through uplifting music, the Eucharistic celebration, and the opportunity for anointing by deanery clergy. The Mass concluded with shared refreshments, further strengthening the spirit of togetherness.

DSC meetings continue with good attendance, fostering a genuine sense of a “deanery identity” and collaboration. Each meeting includes prayer and reflection on the pastoral plan, and opportunities for spiritual conversation based on this. Representatives greatly value the time spent praying, planning, sharing, and enjoying fellowship together, with particular appreciation for the Christmas dinners generously hosted by our Dean, Fr Andrew.

The development of Families of Parishes (FOP) has begun to bear fruit:

Huyton Family: Building on ongoing discernment about the future of the Church in Huyton, this family has conducted parish surveys and established an Exploring the Future Group. The resulting document is guiding further discussions and discernment. Priests of the FOP are celebrating the Eucharist across different parishes, enabling parishioners to experience the wider family of the deanery and strengthening bonds of unity.

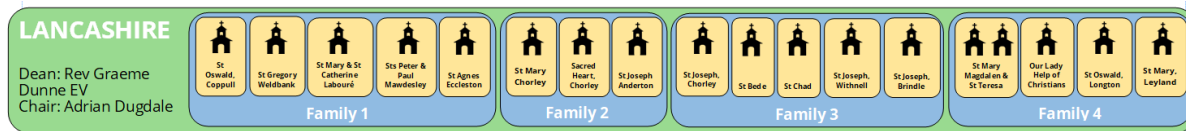
Prescot Family: This family is actively exploring a shared RCIA programme, contributing to the Confirmation programme, and planning Family of Parishes Advent Masses.

Kirkby Family: This family has established a Family of Parishes St Vincent de Paul Conference and will commence a shared RCIA programme in October.

The DSC is currently planning a Deanery Day of Reflection and Formation for Ministers of the Word, scheduled for December. In addition, the DSC has agreed to pilot a deanery-wide project to create welcoming communities for prison leavers. This initiative will be launched on Prisoner Sunday, October 12th, at all Masses in the deanery, with a follow-up meeting for those interested in taking part.

Looking ahead, a central priority for the DSC is to foster an even deeper sense of deanery identity, where collaboration is understood as normative for the life and mission of the Church. Effective communication will be essential to this goal. To that end, the DSC will explore practical ways of doing this, including options such as creating a substantial deanery newsletter to be made available in all parishes.

Lancashire: 17 parishes, 18 churches, 14 priests (1 religious), 3 deacons



This has been a challenging year for the LMDSC.

Whilst we have established four Families of Parishes -

one (a small one) has not functioned very effectively (perhaps due to clerical indifference?)

one has had to grapple with a church closure (surplus to requirements for a combined parish, achieved by consent of the parish council and tacit agreement of affected parishioners)

another is currently grappling with a proposed parish closure which is very much against the wishes of the Parishioners who have mounted a vigorous campaign for the parish to remain open.

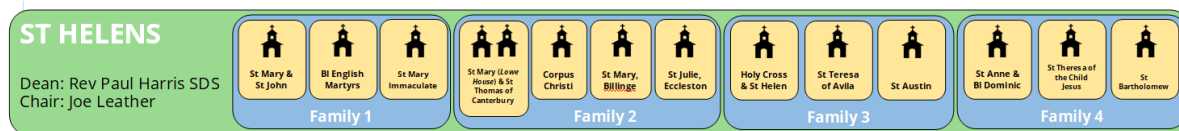
On a positive note, the final FoP is functioning very effectively and has had several meetings, providing the DSC with comprehensive reports as to make-up (geography, personnel, churches, schools, church halls, mass provision, attendances etc.). A working group of priests, deacons and two lay representatives has been established to discern the way ahead and find ways of working more closely. They have identified core values and hope/fears for the future as a FoP with shared leadership and strong lay participation. A quarterly FoP newsletter is produced to aid communication.

Whilst we await the outcome of the Sefton pilot, some concern has been raised about speed of progress towards assessing parish facilities, estate, finances etc. particularly given the ever-present shortage of priests and the number who will be retiring within the next few years.

The creation of a DSC Chairs group led by Chris Higgins has been very useful. It's good to hear how other Deaneries are working, meet their Chairs, share good ideas and concerns over progress. There is also an "education" angle – most Chairs have no knowledge or expertise on canon law, Archdiocesan/Parish financial arrangements or who needs to be contacted at A/D administration level with particular issues.

For the future, the hope is that all our FoPs will settle down and become proactive in carrying their parishioners forward to cope with the inevitable changes to the traditional church they know and love.

St Helens: 13 parishes, 14 churches, 8 priests (4 religious), 4 deacons



More than 100 delegates from across the St Helens Deanery met in February 2025 to celebrate their shared faith and to look at ways to move forward. Fr Paul Harris, newly appointed Dean and Julie Mooney, Chair organised the event to bring together, not only the Deanery Synodal Council members but representatives from each church within the deanery.

The response to the open invitation was overwhelming and shows a real appetite for parishioners to be involved in the life and mission of the church. It provided a positive platform for sharing our thoughts and ideas which will underpin future collective working and support within our Families of Parishes. It was an encouraging day for the local church here in the deanery. It's wonderful to see the clergy and laity listening to one another and working in collaboration. The Holy Spirit was at work. It became obvious that there is amazing talent and vision in each of the four Families of Parishes.

This gathering informed future priorities and actions and the following were planned in June across the families:

Family 1:

A meeting is arranged for representatives to meet soon; with plans to invite more people from each parish to join a Family meeting. The arranging of a family social event will follow. Social events to be shared via newsletter.

Discussion on need to schedule future meetings led to an agreement that they should be held quarterly throughout the year with Family of Parishes development activity undertaken in between.

Agendas will include updates from each Deanery Family, and Archdiocese updates.

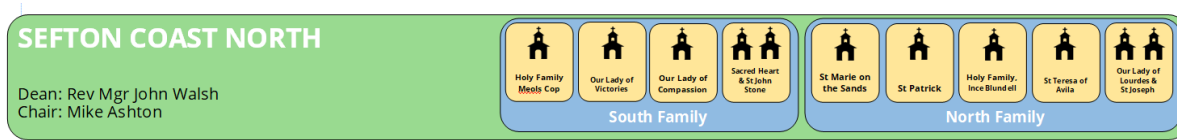
Family 2:

A change of priests has been announced recently and has stalled family of Parishes development. It is hoped that the new priest will join the meeting to discuss developments in the family grouping. Representatives may need extra help and support to work together as families and share experiences.

Family 3:

Develop children's liturgy across the family of parishes. St Austin's had not had one in place since Covid. Members of the St Teresa's Liturgy team offered to run session(s) at St Austin's to restart this, once a team had been assembled by Fr Martin. We also suggested a Family of Parishes Newsletter to improve communication and give the Family of Parishes an identity, (produce logo?).

Sefton Coast North: 9 parishes, 11 churches, 6 priests, 3 deacons



In October and November 2024 Two meetings were held at Holy Family (Southport), and the second at Sacred Heart (Ainsdale). About 60 people attended the meetings.

The purpose of these meetings was to follow up the summer consultations about ways to promote inter-parish collaboration in the Deanery and so that we could serve more effectively our mission as a Church – to share God’s love with the world.

The aim of the November meetings was to facilitate the forming of teams, each of which would adopt and take forward one of six priority areas emerging from what parishioners had said in the summer meetings. These were

- Communication and administration across the Deanery & Families of Parishes
- Adult faith formation
- Church music collaboration
- Engaging young people & children
- Strengthening our outreach, charitable work and support for the vulnerable
- Enhancing provision for those with special needs

Adult faith formation - 12 team members.

Engaging Young People & Children - 11 team members.

Communication and Administration - 13 team members.

Strengthening our outreach, charitable work and support for the vulnerable – 11 team members.

Church music collaboration – 11 team members.

Special needs – team still being formed.

Unfortunately, the previous Chair decided to withdraw soon after these meetings so the initial positive movements and subgroups that had been formed stalled somewhat.

However, a series of events for music and adult formation were held across the year.

The music ministry meetings were arranged by Karen Groves, the first took place on the

12 Oct 2024 - attended by 36 people at Holy Family Church Hall, Southport.

The second event 22nd Feb 2024 was led by Maria Hall on Liturgical Music and the third event ‘Singing the Liturgy’ led by Jo Boyce from CJM was held on the 28th of June 2024 again at Holy Family Church Hall.

With regards to Adult formation several gatherings were held.

Exploring Accompaniment and what this means for individuals, Parishes and Deaneries was held on the 22nd of March led by Archie Cameron and Karen Groves.

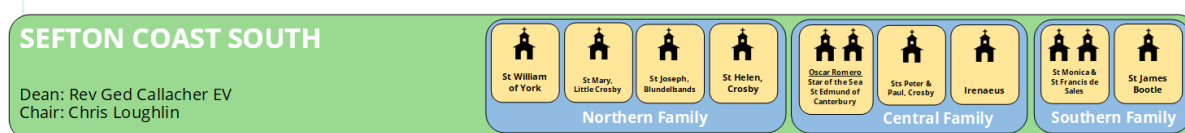
The second event held on the 5th of July 2025 was on the theme of Faith in the Family, led by John Sullivan and Archie Cameron.

A further event is planned for Saturday 15th November with the theme of Improvising our Lives in Tune with God and will present an opportunity to reflect on the soundtrack and rhythm of our life: its key stages, influences, turning points and openings to grace.

A new chair, Michael Ashton was appointed by the Archbishop in May 2025. There was a meeting with the DSC on the 4th of June with the main focus being on the Parish development Strategy that the three Sefton Deaneries are piloting.

The main priority moving forward is the process of reflection and discernment that will take place once the data gathering from the Parishes is completed. The DSC will meet early in 2026 for a day of reflection and prayer at Ince Benet to process the information and plan our mission and ministry moving forward.

Sefton Coast South: 8 parishes, Irenaeus Project, 11 churches, 11 priests (5 religious), 2 deacons



Over the past two years, Sefton Coast South Deanery has embarked on a rich and evolving journey of faith, formation, and community. In 2023, we began with a well-attended retreat for Eucharistic Ministers at the Irenaeus Centre, Crosby, led by Fr Chris Thomas. For many, this was their first retreat experience, and it proved deeply enriching. Building on this momentum, we continued to offer deanery-wide retreats: an Advent 2023 retreat for Ministers of the Word, a summer 2024 retreat on being a synodal deanery led by Deacon Mike Bennett, and a further Advent retreat in 2024 on centring prayer, guided by Fr Richard Sloane and Sr Mary Rose.

Our three Families of Parishes have embraced the synodal call in diverse and creative ways. The North family hosted a sell-out Ceilidh in autumn 2024, a joyful celebration that sparked ongoing gatherings and plans for a local pilgrimage. The Central family has focused on deepening spiritual formation, hosting additional retreats for ministers of the Word and the table. Meanwhile, the South family led a Family of Parishes pilgrimage to Lourdes in September 2025 which included 40+ parishioners. They have also launched a Catholic men's social group who meet periodically and, for the second consecutive year, celebrated Holy Thursday Mass together.

During Lent 2025, our Deanery Synodal Council (DSC) hosted a series of encounter sessions, bringing together over 60 parishioners from across the deanery to reflect on their parish work. These sessions were energising and affirming, laying the groundwork for the DSC's plans to form deanery mission teams in the future. These teams will foster collaboration, deepen support networks, and promote mutual accompaniment in faith.

We are now nearing the end of Phase 1 of the Parish Development Tool completion. This phase has helped us reflect deeply on our current realities and strengths. As we look ahead to Phase 2—the discernment stage—we anticipate a time of prayerful listening and strategic planning.

Our priority for the coming year is to refresh our deanery vision considering insights gained from the Parish Development Tool. We are committed to exploring new ways of building encounter opportunities across our deanery, especially through deeper engagement with our schools and young people. Together, we continue to walk forward in faith, hope, and community.

Sefton Inland: 6 parishes, 10 churches, 5 priests, 1 deacon



Sefton Inland Deanery spans a diverse area—from Litherland and Netherton to Aintree, Maghull, and Lydiate—encompassing both rural and urban communities. This rich diversity is central to our identity, and through the Deanery Synodal Council (DSC), we've worked to celebrate and support each unique parish.

From the outset, we recognised the value of collaboration in shaping a sustainable future for our Catholic presence. The substantial work of developing and successfully implementing families of parishes was completed. It became clear as the DSC worked that a whole Deanery approach was the right way forward. This decision was presented to and ratified by the priests. One of the underlying reasons was concern it would be too easy to split into areas rich in resources and areas resource poor. It is clear this is not the way of the Gospel and would undermine our whole mission and vision for the future.

An example of adopting a whole deanery approach is in the sharing of successful outcomes, one parish developed a think tank group, who meet regularly to facilitate the synodal process, discussing this within the DSC allowed others to emulate what has worked well.

Recent changes have already impacted our structure. In January, two priests received new appointments, and one retired due to health reasons without replacement. This resulted in the closure of 2 churches and the amalgamation of some parishes. Local parish consultation meetings allowed parishioners to share concerns and contribute to the process of change. The Archbishop ratified the changes ensuring pastoral provision meets local needs.

These changes happened quickly due to reduced clergy presence. The reality of declining church attendance and fewer Priests urges us to continue to assess our pastoral priorities, sacramental provision, financial resources, and building needs.

We understand that all of us, priests, people and deacons to name but a few, are all learning a new way of working together. Developing ways to support each other with individual and collective challenges is an essential work in progress.

The Parish Planning Strategy—launched in March—is being piloted in Sefton Deaneries. This diocesan initiative is our main focus for the year, guiding us in planning for the future.

We are currently in Stage One, using a parish planning tool to collect data—pastoral, liturgical, sociological, financial, and buildings—from each parish. Once gathered and shared, this data will help us understand the evolving culture of our Catholic community.

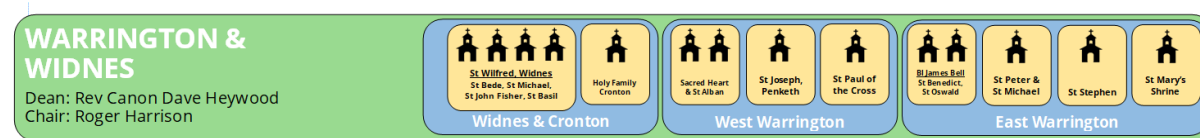
With this clearer picture, parishes, clergy, and the DSC can begin shaping a realistic and sustainable future for Catholic life in Sefton. Stage One will conclude by the end of October, after which findings will be shared with our communities. Stage Two will then begin: a period of honest reflection and visioning to ensure a vibrant Catholic presence for years to come.

Currently Parishes are at different stages of gathering their audit data. Those at a more advanced stage have found that the process has been a great way to build a culture of discernment and forward thinking.

We would like to celebrate the resilience of our communities as we have navigated the ongoing process of change, which has sometimes been painful.

All within the deanery have shown a desire to make the new reality work. We look forward with faith and great hope as we work together to shape the future of our beautiful and evolving catholic church and community.

Warrington and Widnes: 9 parishes, 14 churches, 13 priests (6 religious), 5 deacons



Warrington and Widnes Deanery: We have hastened slowly!

"Rather than focusing on practical elements of our work over the last twelve months or so, Warrington and Widnes Deanery would like to share how working together has impacted upon us as individuals on our spiritual journey, influencing the ability to discern and thus Engage with Families of Parishes and beyond.

Of all aspects of the November ASC report, Accompaniment has been most crucial to our group. We have come to know and trust each other, enabling us to challenge each other in the spirit of Synodality. Accompaniment of clergy has grown with this aspect being both offered and received. Shared responsibility is now palpable. The creation of a "Facilitation Group" to guide the DSC itself and "Vision groups" – based on the model of Widnes – are examples of true accompaniment.

A core factor in all of this is the use of "Conversations in the Spirit". Understanding of this has moved slowly rather like the Holy Spirit but is now embedded. We are comfortable with this approach and as a DSC we are able to converse and discern in a variety of ways which is aiding communication and engagement, bringing practical elements into focus – (newsletters, notice boards, displays, the pulpit). There is no doubt that we do feel the power of the Holy Spirit working through us with the concept of Accompaniment aiding the formation of and the growth of Families of Parishes throughout the Deanery.

The strength of Conversations in the Spirit has enabled us to see more clearly the paths towards shared catechesis training and the development of youth/young adult groups. This latter aspect has

taxed our brains (along with everyone else!!) Young people are searching for the meaning of life. Our challenge - how does the church meet this need? More importantly, how do we engage with parents?

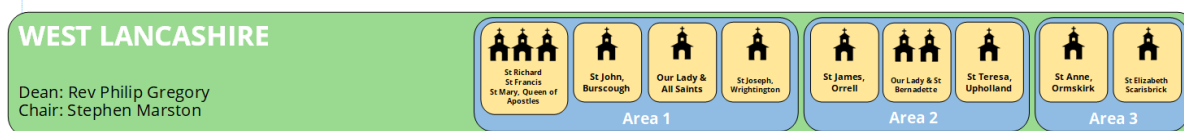
Accompaniment has been the key aspect of clergy support. There has been much progress: Breaking down barriers; Increased support; Practical, Spiritual accompaniment; a Caring culture established; Deanery Masses, meetings and events. We would like to see The Diaconate sharing in this improved culture.

Regarding Strategic Action, continued focus has to be on Formation in Synodality more widely amongst our communities. Along with other Deaneries, we have faced the strain and challenge of diversity of context and demography. We have striven to accommodate all needs but believe a review is required regarding boundaries and the specific demands of all parish communities”.

Priority for the next twelve months for the Warrington and Widnes Deanery:

“To fully embrace the concept of the Parish Development Strategy, led by our Families of Parishes, monitored and guided by the DSC”

West Lancs: 9 parishes, 12 churches, 6 priests (3 religious), 2 deacons



I am pleased to report that the membership of the West Lancashire Synodal Council, save for a youth representative, is fully representative of and across the Deanery.

In addition to those listed as ASC members we have a primary school headteacher and four Parish representatives on our Council. We still seek a youth representative but college and university placements are making this problematic.

The last 12 months has been a period of consolidation and reflection where we have focused on ensuring the Council is fully representative of this unique Deanery. It's geography alone has meant we have had to create a strong communication strategy including all the Parish Priests and Parish Administrators. This is now in place and working ensuring the Deanery Synodal Plan is being circulated and discussed in Parishes. This is and will remain an important focus. We have started the process of and audit of buildings, resources and ministries.

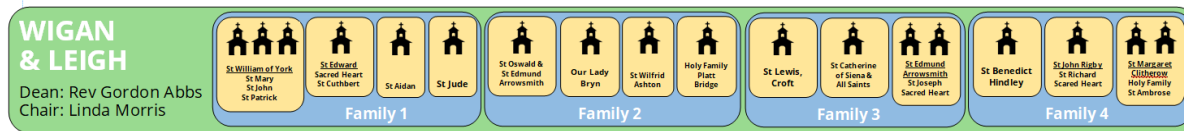
Parish events are now being circulated across the Deanery with evidence of Parishioners attending Special Masses, Pilgrimages and social events in different locations

A highlight so far has been the Novena held between September 5th- 13th September 2024. The nine days leading up to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was a spiritual high for all those involved. Mass was celebrated at St Richard's Skelmersdale, St James' Orrell, St John the Evangelist Burscough, St Joseph's Wroughtington, St Elizabeth's Scarsbrick, Our Lady and All Saints Parbold, St Therese's Upholland, St Marie's Standish finishing at St Anne's Ormskirk.

We continue to work on our Deanery Development Plan and each meeting leaves with a theme for the next. Last year we co-ordinated RCIA, retreats and pilgrimages.

Our next theme and priority for the next 12 months will be almost exclusively the youth of our Deanery. The Chaplains from our three high schools and our 6th Form college will present to Council initiatives to engage the youth in Church, in schools and in the Community.

Wigan and Leigh: 14 parishes, 18 churches, 11 priests (1 religious), 9 deacons



Accompaniment

Welcoming and attentive listening to people within and beyond the church community are essential for progressing relationships.

Communication

The Holy Spirit guides us. Generally, communication has improved within meetings and throughout parishes, families and across the deanery/diocese. Information is shared via traditional means, technology and social media.

Youth & Young Adults

Links between parishes and schools form good relationships with youth and young adults. Young adults continue to be Confirmed, though only a minority are active in their parishes. A few are more active as altar servers whilst some have joined in pilgrimages. Children's Liturgy increases Mass attendance of young families.

Engagement

Levels of engagement vary between families.

In two families, engagement is good - clergy and reps. meet and proposals, involving parishioners of various demographics, are activated. In one family, the priest, reps. and parishioners of 3 of the 4 parishes engage and are active, however, though parishioners of the fourth parish engage with the others, the clergy and rep. do not engage.

Clergy and reps. from the fourth family are yet to meet.

Clergy Support

Clergy are doing their best under the circumstances / workloads they face. Clergy and laity need to recognise there is a shared responsibility to advance the Church's mission. When clergy are engaged, we are able to offer support.

Strategic Action

To share responsibilities we need more trained active laity. In the absence of clergy etc. there needs to be a means to continue action – Family Directory and Manual sharing information between parishes/churches. Setting up of parish councils. Review the status and use of church properties. The provision of more information, to enable the development of a Strategy.

Synodality at local level

People beginning to understand the concept of synodality. Meetings at various levels are held in a synodal manner with everyone having a voice and being listened to. Parishes, schools and groups are working together to mutual benefit. Unfortunately, where parishes are not engaged, there is no synodality.

Formation & Training

Ongoing formation for laity in their existing roles (e.g. empathetic listening) and training for new volunteers is required. Could this be held locally and at convenient times for working people?

What do we want to celebrate?

In some families, clergy and reps. are engaged, work together, build trust and communicate well. Very successful events have allowed congregations to start building relationships and get to know people outside their own church. Hugely successful Jubilee Year.

Highlight a priority for the next 12 months

To initiate engagement in the Family where clergy and reps. have not met and to improve engagement between all parishes in the family where one parish is not engaged.