In response to the archdiocese's pastoral plan, our deanery has been looking at how we can better:

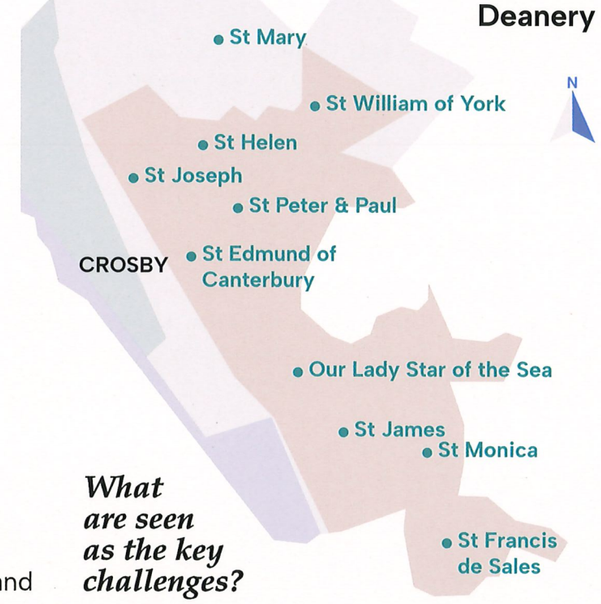
- share the Good News of Jesus Christ
- reach out to those who feel distant from the Church, especially those on the margins of society
- support our priests and parish volunteers better, especially in a time of declining clergy and parishioner numbers
- bring the voices and ideas of our young people into the discussions and decisions about our local mission
- use our individual gifts, buildings, and resources to strengthen the Church's local mission today and beyond

Two mutually-reinforcing proposals for the renewal of our deanery are presented for discernment. Together, they reflect a Church that is missionary in the spirit of the Gospel, faithful in stewardship and structure, and synodal in practice.

What will be needed for these proposals to be implemented?

- An ongoing commitment to build a local Catholic Church which is a 'communion of communities' and is grounded in mission, ongoing formation, and evangelisation
- A clear, transparent pastoral plan led by the DSC with defined objectives and review points
- A clear understanding of synodal consultative processes that genuinely involve clergy and laity
- Strong communication and pastoral accompaniment, especially during change, to respond to the pastoral and emotional impact of parish mergers and/or future church closures
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of lay leadership considering archdiocesan policy and canon law
- Formation and training programmes for clergy and lay ministers/leaders
- Development of new administrative and financial systems, with processes put in place to ensure fairness and transparency in resource decision-making
- Investment in youth and school chaplaincy connections so to hear the voices of children and young people

Sefton Coast South Deanery



What are seen as the key challenges?

- Avoiding a purely structural change without visible missionary renewal
- Ensuring proposed newly-formed parishes can work independently and together in their call to mission
- Risk of unclear authority/leadership, poor understanding of/resistance to synodal co-responsibility, duplication of roles/systems
- Overburdening a small group of committed volunteers due to a lack of increased lay participation
- Ensuring representation from across diverse parish communities, especially of minorities and the marginalised

PROPOSAL ONE
Parish Restructure for Mission and Sustainability

To form a new parish in place of each currently existing Family of Parishes group so to steward responsibly our faith, missionary works and resources.

	North Parish	Central Parish	South Parish
Parishes	St Helen's St Joseph's St Mary's St William of York	St Oscar Romero St Peter and St Paul	St James' St Francis de Sales St Monica's
Current No. of churches	4	3	3
Current No. of PPs	2	2	2 (inc. 1 SDB)
Projected No. of PPs	1	1	2 (inc. 1 SDB)

What will this mean?

- A reduction from six parishes to three in the South Sefton Coast deanery
- Individual churches staying open presently as we believe in preserving and building parish communities before closing churches, but with an acknowledgement that this will have to be reviewed in the near future
- An increased capacity for shared lay ministry and participation in church administration
- Greater consideration of, and action to address, pressures and demands placed on priests who currently serve multiple parishes/churches
- Opportunity to make better use of resources
- Changes to how buildings are used in the future (mother churches, chapel of ease, closure etc.)

PROPOSAL TWO
Synodal Parish Teams for Mission & Co-Responsibility

To develop synodal parish teams to assist clergy in parish administration, ensuring mission and ministry are at the heart of all pastoral works.

What will this mean?

Each parish will have a team of clergy and lay people working together to guide its life and mission. These teams will ensure that co-responsibility for mission is at the heart of parish life, promoting the vocation of all the baptised in evangelisation. These teams would help:

- Support the parish priest in leadership and decision-making, keeping the parish at the heart of sacramental and community life
- Make the best and responsible use of our priests, people, and buildings
- Create space for more people to be involved in mission by organising parish activities and outreach
- With the accompaniment of parishioners and the wider community, adapting parish mission to today's needs while remaining faithful to tradition
- Support and strengthen the integration of parish, school, and community life

Invitation to participate

This summary is offered for ***prayerful reflection, discussion & consultation.*** Your insights, concerns, and hopes are essential as we discern the best way forward together.

CLOSING DATE:
20th September 2026

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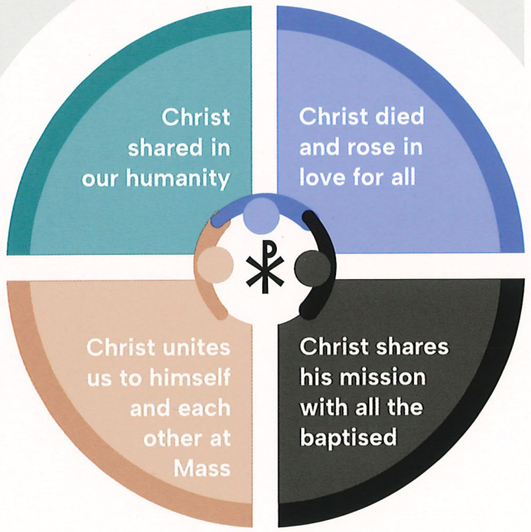

Archdiocese of Liverpool

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Methods of consultation:

Over the next few months your parish will be organising a number of ways to discern and consult on the two proposals. This process is your opportunity to pray about these proposals and have your say.

- **Online form – you can respond to the proposals using the QR code or link**
- **Open meetings held in your parish/schools (which will offer opportunities to listen to one another and discuss)**
- **Response boxes in your church for paper replies**
- **Email response directly to the Archdiocese at pds@rcaol.org.uk**

Prayer

God of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we share together in the life of our parish family, we ask you:

Lead us onwards, on the journey of discovering your dream for us;

Lead us outwards, in love and solidarity, cherishing each other and every other;

Lead us upwards, to experience more intensely your inexpressible life;

Lead us inwards, deeper into the mystery of what you have created us to be.

PARISH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Towards the future with hope

"The Church exists to proclaim Jesus Christ to all peoples."

This is our mission. Christ loves us, has saved us, walks with us and offers the hope of eternal life.

We are pilgrims of hope who wish to share the hope of Jesus Christ with others. I invite you to help shape the future of the Church for the Archdiocese.

The mission today, for tomorrow, needs realistic and forward-looking structures because people have moved, the cost of maintaining too many buildings is prohibitive and the number of clergy has reduced.

We need the means that help us proclaim Jesus Christ to all people and help them to participate in the life and mission of the Church. This is the calling of all the baptised.

Our hope in Jesus Christ, our culture of vocation, and our participation in the life of the Church will then foster faith in the family, attract more people to serve the Church as priests and religious, and enable all members of the Church to proclaim Jesus to the world and serve others through faith in action.

Archbishop John Sherrington, April 2025

Questions for your reflection:

1. **What stands out for (or excites) you in what the Archbishop said?**
2. **What ideas for the future come to the forefront of your mind?**
3. **What worries you as you imagine the future?**

Our shared mission

Like the first Christians, we are called not just to maintain what we have, but to grow as a missionary Church. Jesus asks us to 'go and make disciples' (Matthew 28:19) and calls for all the baptised, not just priests, to be part of His mission.

Together, we are invited to be a Church that reaches out, a Church that listens and includes, a Church where everyone has a part to play.

Archdiocese of Liverpool